

**COAST
Foundation
study**



Economic and Livelihood Activities: Engagement and Potentials of Rohingya Communities at Camps

July, 2022

Executive Summary

This study by COAST looked into the economic and livelihood engagement of the Rohingya community living in Bangladesh camps in Cox's Bazar. Findings depict some disturbing pictures vis-à-vis their opportunities to participate in economic activities. With little access to market, women, especially those who head the households, find it difficult to live with dignity in the absence of reliable sources of income. This study found only 7% Rohingya women are involved in economic activities inside the camps, when the figure is 57.46% for the overall Rohingya population.

The study interviewed 181 respondents from seven camps -- 73.48% of them male and 26.52% female. Together, these families have 1,151 members, of whom 50.56% are male and 49.44% female. In their country of origin in Myanmar, nearly half of the respondents (45.86%) were engaged in farming. The study found almost half of the Rohingyas (42.54.%) are involved in different economic activities inside the camps. Of the respondents involved in economic pursuits, 19.48% are engaged in vegetable cultivation and 15.19% in running grocery stores. Findings also show

43.09% of the respondents have the opportunity to engage in skill labor like building shelters/homes, repair of solar panels and maintenance work, and vegetable cultivation and 36.46% to run grocery stores. During interviews, the respondents sought various input support -- 46.41% wanted seeds, 56.35% wanted chickens and 40.33% sought poultry sheds.

Almost all (95.58%) respondents viewed that these products have great potentials for sale inside the camps. As for other livelihoods skills, 32.60% can make bamboo products, while 47.51% are in need for needles, yarn, and frames for designing tapestry on clothes. More than half (51.93%) of the respondents think setting up shops inside the camps is a good option to sell their products.

In short, the study found there are great potentials for engaging the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN), including women, in Income-Generating Activities (IGA) inside the camps to build their financial capital and thereby boost their confidence.

Background of Study

Given that Cox's Bazar has been home to over Since August 2017, when the largest-ever Rohingya influx in Bangladesh began, Cox's Bazar has been home to over one million Rohingya, turning it into a refugee-hosting region in need of humanitarian and development support. The massive influx of the Myanmar nationals and their cramped settlement inside the camps have since heightened multifaceted threats and vulnerabilities in terms of food and nutrition security, livelihoods, water and sanitation, physical-social-legal protection, local environmental degradation, and poor health. Humanitarian groups and UN agencies are actively trying to improve the situation, although the support is dwindling.

The gap between the demand and commitment for fund is evidently very high this year, as only 21% of the Joint Response Plan's (JRP) funding requirement in 20221 have been reported so far. New critical humanitarian grounds were created due to ongoing conflicts and war in Ukraine and

some other countries. To reduce dependency on humanitarian and development funding, it is of paramount importance that we focus on training the Rohingya people on various life skills and IGA skills to make them self-reliant and self-sustainable.

COAST Foundation undertook this study against this backdrop to find answers to some critical questions such as: what are the skills that the Rohingya people already have and which new skills can be transferred for their sustainable livelihoods inside the Bangladesh camps, as they wait for repatriation to their homeland.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to explore the existing capacity of the Rohingya community and new areas of skill development and IGA opportunities inside the camps. It is true that many NGOs are currently implementing some projects inside the camps to improve the lives and livelihoods of the Rohingya population, but COAST commissioned this study to generate some evidence-based ideas for the same. The

specific objectives of the study are:

- To identify the productive activities that are currently taking place in Rohingya camps,
- To identify some skills and income opportunities that can lead to income gains of the forcibly displaced people and thereby reduce the pressure on the local market economy and
- To explore how best to involve the Rohingya people in creative and productive work.

Methodology of the Study

This study was conducted based on the primary data collected from seven camps where COAST has programmatic presence to support the Rohingya population. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were followed. For the qualitative method, a sample survey was used and for the quantitative method, FGD, and KII were used.

Sample

The sampling formula determines 181 The sample size of 181 households was determined using online formula with confidence level of 95% and margin of error level of 7.13%. The sample size was determined by a web sample size calculator. The questionnaire was designed for collecting quantitative data based on the study objectives. Data were collected through Kobo toolbox for easier data collection through android phones. Before data collection, enumerators, who are locals and are familiar with Rohingya dialect, were oriented on the questionnaire, the study purpose, interview methods and research ethics. A hands-on training was organised on data collection through Kobo toolbox. The cleaned data were also analysed by using Kobo excel analyser 1.23 and interpreted in line with the project objective.

In addition to interviewing 181 respondents (133 male and 48 female), the study held Key Informant Interviews (KII) with Rohingya adolescents and community leaders (Majhi).

Study area

Data were collected from seven separate camps out of 33 camps, namely Camp 4 (extension), Camp 8 (east), Camp 11, Camp 12, Camp 14, Camp 19, and Camp 20 (extension).

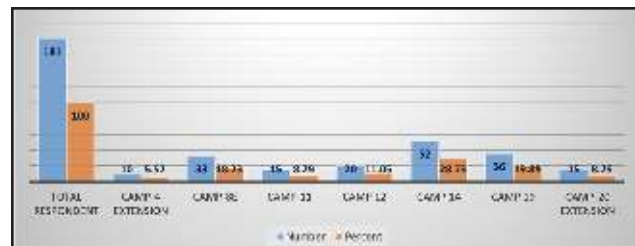
Limitations of the Study

This is a sample-based study and only a fifth of the camps were covered. In some cases, language was a barrier, although all enumerators came from the local community and are familiar with Rohingya dialect. Besides, only a handful of Focus Groups Discussions (FGD) were conducted considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings of the Study

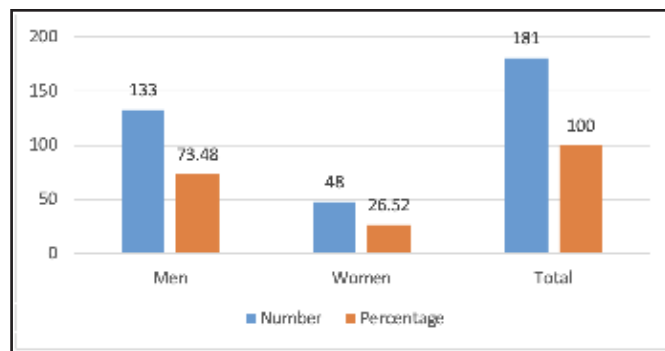
Respondent & Survey Area

Of the total sample size of 181 Rohingya families from seven camps, 5.52% were drawn from Camp 4 (extension), 18.23% from Camp 8 (East), 8.29% from Camp 11, 11.05% from Camp 12, 28.73% from Camp 14, 19.89% from Camp 19, and 8.29% from Camp 20 (extension).



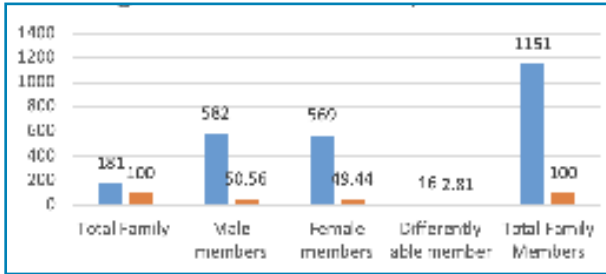
Gender of the Respondents

As shown in Fig 2, 73.48% (133 out of 181) of the respondents were male, and 26.52% female. All respondents took part in the study.



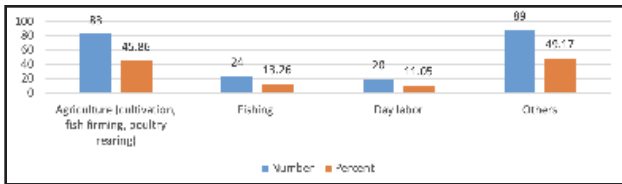
Family size of the respondents

In all, the respondents' families have 1,151 members, with the average family size being 6.35. The male-female ratio was found to be 50.56%:49.44%. Sixteen (2.81%) of them are persons with disabilities (PWDs)



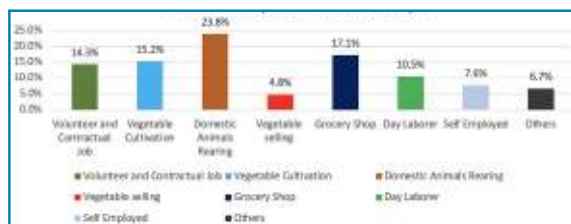
Respondents' livelihoods while in Myanmar

Asked about their profession back in Myanmar, 45.86% respondents said they were involved in agricultural activities (cultivation, fish farming, poultry rearing), 13.26% in fishing, 11.05% in day labour and 49.17% in other activities



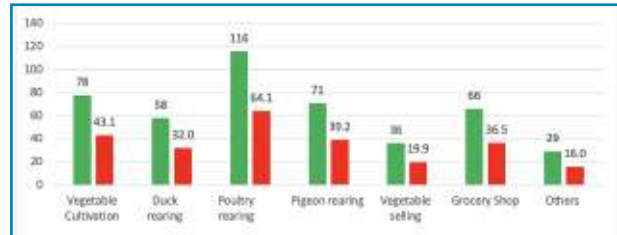
Livelihoods in camps

The study found 42.54% of the families are involved in different activities to support their livelihoods while 57.46% (104 out of 181) are not engaged in any economic activities, meaning they are fully dependent on the support from humanitarian agencies and international funding. Of those engaged in some kind of economic activities, 23.8% are involved in domestic animal rearing (poultry, duck and pigeon), 17.1% are involved in grocery shop, 15.2% are involved in vegetable cultivation, 14.3% in voluntary and contractual job with NGOs, and 4.8% are involved in selling vegetables, 10.5% are day laborer, 7.6% are self-employed and 6.7% are involved with others activities such as handicrafts.



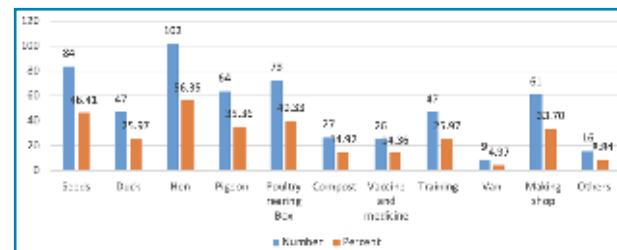
Potential opportunities for employments and self-employments in camps

Asked about potential income-generating activities inside the camps, 43.1% favoured vegetable cultivation, 32.0% duck rearing, 64.1% poultry rearing, and 39.2% pigeon rearing as viable livelihood options. Besides, 36.5% viewed running grocery shops is a good livelihood options while 16.0% chose other options like mobile servicing, and tailoring.



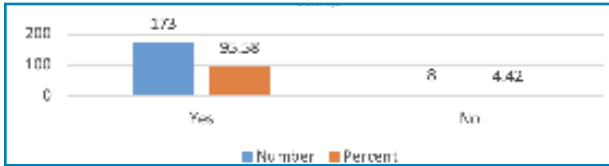
Support needed to engage in livelihoods and self-employments in camps

Figure 7 presents the types of support the Rohingya community needs to start some income-generating options. When asked about this, 46.41% said they would like to get seeds, 25.97% wanted ducks, 56.35% poultry and 35.36% favoured pigeons. Apart from that, 40.33% of the respondents said they need poultry sheds, 14.19% compost fertiliser, and 14.36% sought technical services such as vaccination and medicine. A good number of them (25.79%) spoke of skills training to implement various IGAs, 4.97% wanted vans, 33.70% said they need financial support to start grocery shops, while 8.84% sought other assistance like cash grant and seeds, vaccine etc.



Opportunities for selling products in camps

As for the marketability of the products inside the camps, 95.58% said these products have high demand inside the camps and would sell well, as opposed to 4.42% who disagreed.



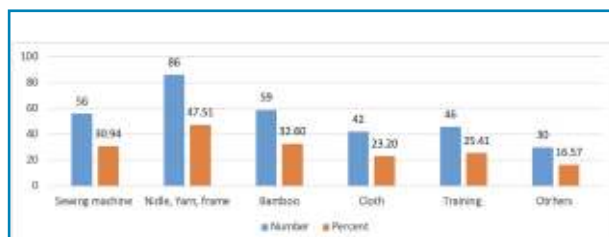
Handicraft skills of Rohingya population

The study found that 95.0% Rohingya population has varieties of skills which, if utilised, can support their livelihoods. Highest 44.77% have skills to make bamboo products, followed by 42.69% who can make fishing net, 36.63% can make dresses, 22.09% have designing (handicraft items) skills and 2.91% have various other skills, including designing table cloths.



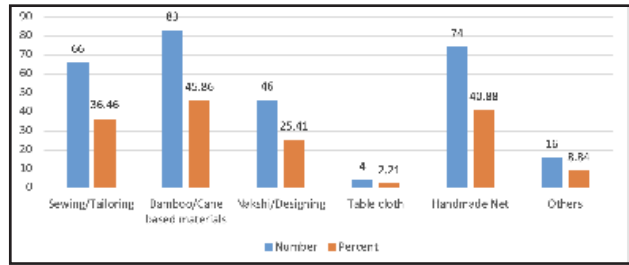
Input support needed for engaging in handicrafts

Given their financial constraints, the Rohingya people said they need some input support to engage in IGAs using their existing handicraft-making skills. Of the respondents, 30.94% said they need sewing machines, 47.51% need needles, yarn, or frame for designing clothing items, 32.60% need bamboo materials, 23.20% fabric, 25.41% need training while 16.57% need other support like equipment, and start-up capital.



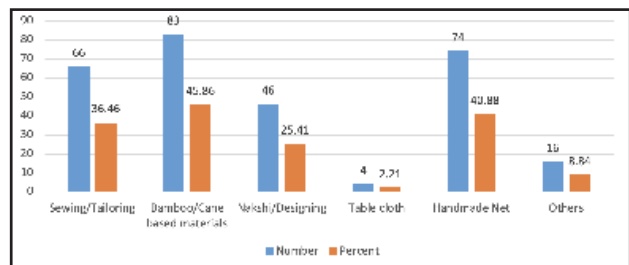
Demand of handicrafts in camp areas

Respondents are highly optimistic about the prospects of sales of their handicraft products in the camp areas. Findings show they are positive that they can sell clothing items, bamboo/cane products, design work and fishing nets inside and outside the camps.



Market opportunities for handicraft products outside the camps

More than half of the respondents said they could set up and run shops inside the camps to sell their produces/products while nearly a third of them said they can do so outside the camps.



Community existing skill, capacity, and expertise

Existing Capacity in Rohingya Camps for male:

- Agriculture - Cultivation, Fish Farming,
- Livestock: Poultry rearing, domestic animals rearing,
- Small Business – Small grocery shop, Tea Stall,
- Skill-based work: Solar panel repair and maintenance, Carpentry (Bamboo craft), net weaving, Electrical work, Bamboo house making, Masonry, Mat making, Barber, Mobile repairing, Umbrella repairing, boat repairing, etc.

Existing Capacity in Rohingya Camps for female:

- Agriculture: Vegetable cultivation, homestead gardening.
- Livestock: Duck and hen rearing, poultry rearing, domestic animals rearing.
- Skill-based work/handicraft: Tailoring and Dress Making, Boutiques, Cap making, Bamboo craft, Net making, Mat making, and quilt making.

Potential Livelihood and skill development opportunities

Potential Livelihood and skill development opportunities for Male:

- Climate adaptive Agriculture technology,
- Vertical Gardening,
- Mobile Servicing,
- Solar Panel Repair and Maintenance,
- Jute Bag production,
- Net making,
- Plastic Collecting and Recycling,
- Shelter Repairing,
- Soap making and
- Pigeon rearing.

Potential Livelihood and skill development opportunities for Female:

- Vertical Gardening,
- Chicken rearing in boxes,
- Dress Making, Boutiques, Handicraft,
- Sanitary Pad Making,
- Bag Making (Paper, Cloth),
- First aid course/ midwifery,
- Crafting, mat making,
- Net making,
- Agriculture.

Final comments

Based on the study findings and recommendations from community members, the study makes the following final comments for further improvement of the lives and livelihoods of the displaced Rohingya people:

- To improve food security and nutrition security of the Rohingya population, government officials, FGDs, and KII participants suggested taking up skills development activities in the camp areas. They also spoke of providing start-up capital support for the Rohingya people to engage in various IGAs. However, given the ban on IGA establishment inside the camps, none of those will yield any results, if the

policymakers do not reverse this decision.

- Self-employment and home-based small business initiatives have great potentials inside the camps. Promoting them will cut their dependency on the local market.
- Small camp-based markets (like the ones recently demolished by the authorities) might be a good option for the Rohingya people to sell their products within the camps.
- Most of the Rohingya people have multiple skillsets that they acquired back home and also in the camps through training by various development organisations. Relevant input support such as seeds, land, etc. can provide them the much-needed initial push to live with dignity with less support from humanitarian agencies.
- Once they set up IGAs inside the camp, they will need forward market linkage support to be able to sell their produce.





Israt Fatema

Stitching her dream of a better life

Israt Fatema (22) is a young woman with creative talents. She lives with her parents in Camp 12 in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar. Her six-member family used to be fully dependent on the support from NGOs for their survival, although the support was often inadequate to buy food and other essentials. She wanted to come out of this situation and so took part in Skills-Based Education Sessions for six months at the COAST Foundation Multi-purpose Centre, where she learned tailoring, among other things.

sewing machine from Islamic Relief Aid (IRA) through CIC in collaboration with the COAST Foundation. At present, she is earning a little money by making different clothing items for

her fellow camp dwellers. Although she cannot earn much, she has been supporting her family with her little income for the past one year. She spoke of various constraints inside the camp that prevents her and other women to scale up and earn more. The list of obstacles includes a lack of inputs (needle, fabric, zipper, button, etc.) and poor market opportunities inside the camp, as well the general embargo on Rohingya women to move outside the camps. "More Rohingya women like me would be encouraged to start tailoring if there were adequate input support and market opportunities. This could help us earn money inside the camp to support our families," she said.





Having lost his income, Rashid Ullah is worried again

Before he was forced to enter into the Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps along with some 1 million of his compatriots in 2017, Rashid Ullah's family had their own farmland back home that they cultivated for living. It was not much for the eight-member family, but they were self-sufficient and happy. But at the camp, Rashid and his family had no income other than the monthly cash support of BDT 1,148 from the World Food Programme. Rashid was hard-pressed, and found it very difficult to provide food for his family. The money he received from the UN food agency could buy only a part of the family need -- rice, dal, oil, and vegetables. To meet the family needs, he had set up a

small shop that sold various dry food items for children, betel leaf and cigarette. The money he earned covered the medicine, clothing and other costs. Occasionally, he was also able to save a little for his children.

But Rashid is worried again. The camp authorities demolished all business structures inside the camp for various reasons, including for "security purpose". Over the last few months, dozens of small shops that once supported the livelihoods of the Rohingya people were taken down.

"With our shops gone, how will we buy the things we need?" Rashid said in an anxious voice.



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