

Rohingya Influx in Bangladesh: Perceptions and Attitudes of the Local Population

Over 400,000 Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar migrated to Bangladesh in 2017, where they now host over one million Rohingya refugees. The massive scale of Rohingya displacement is creating numerous short and long-term challenges for local communities, mainly in the South-eastern coastal regions in Bangladesh. The relationship between the local population and the Rohingyas is ever-changing and is under persistent stress. Therefore, this study aimed to understand the perceptions and attitudes of the local population concerning the social, economic, environmental, political and health sectors associated with the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh. Mixed methods composed of both qualitative and quantitative approaches are employed. The qualitative method consisted of 10 key informant interviews, while the quantitative method involved surveying 640 local adult population from four randomly selected areas of four different sub-districts in Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh.

Based on our findings, perceptions and attitudes vary depending on the proximity to the major Rohingya camps. Furthermore, the frequency of interactions between local population and Rohingya refugees, along with the gender and monthly household income of the host population, also prove to be significant predictors. Analyses using multivariable logistic regression also show that distances from major camps are significantly associated with the risk or threat to health outcomes. Local population have reported a decline in their mental well-being (51.6%), along with concerns regarding their physical well-being (36.3%) and social well-being (39.4%) due to the refugee influx. It is also evident that the attitude among the local host population regarding Rohingya Refugees had also shifted over time, mostly in the negative direction. Sympathy among the host population for Rohingya refugees is declining. Hence, these concerns should be considered by national policymakers and international stakeholders for better interventions.