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Adverse Economic Impact by Rohingya Refugees on Bangladesh: Some Way Forwards

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Abstract:

This paper aims to analyse the adverse effects of the Rohingya influx on the economy of Bangladesh in recent years. Since the independence of Bangladesh, it has been gone through many ups and downs in the country's economic movement. The per capita income of the country has exceeded about two thousand US dollars. All the development indicators are upward in GDP. Rohingya people in Rakhine state, Myanmar have been facing decades of planned discrimination, statelessness, and targeted violence. For many years this kind of torture over the innocent Rohingya women, girls, boys and men has forced them to the influx to Bangladesh. The rapid spread of the Rohingya crisis also has been surprising for last three years to the Bangladesh government. From social to economic, economic to politics Rohingya refugees have impacts into the country. This research paper follows the empirical and narrative oriented research design in relation to find out the negative economic impact of the Rohingya influx to Bangladesh. One of the principal aims of the findings of this paper is to draw the attention of the policymakers and other concerns about the deleterious effects of the influx both in the future and present conditions. First and foremost, the negative impact of the Rohingya influx to Bangladesh on the economy is the increased cost of living and regional employment crisis. Moreover, a huge fall of the daily wage amount can be noticed. Furthermore, the country is facing a noticeable loss in the tourism sector and government expenditure on the health and security sector has risen since 2017. Hence, the government of Bangladesh should take necessary steps for the effective repatriation process without any delay to mitigate the financial cost burden.

Key Words:

Economic Crisis, Rohingya Refugees, Critical Economic Issues and Challenges, Regional Politics, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

The trend of economic growth of Bangladesh in the last few decades since independence is very jealous and far ahead of many countries. An important aspect in Bangladesh's future development plan is to increase regional trade, investment and regional cooperation with a wide range of countries in Southeast Asia (Myat, 2018). Unfortunately, unavoidable Rohingya crisis issue came into our plan that hampered the future development goals since 2017. The refugee crisis in Bangladesh has multidimensional problems. Rohingya crisis has affected the economy, society and the environment. Bangladesh faces many challenges in these three sectors. Impact on the economy have increased the cost of living and create employment crisis. However, it can discourage domestic and foreign investors from investing in projects, which will hinder development plans in Bangladesh. It could have an adverse impact on the country's economy (HAQUE, 2018). Nearly one million Rohingya refugees are currently living in Bangladesh. There is nothing in the newly formed Rohingya refugee camps. There is scarcity of clean water, electricity, healthy sanitation system and efficient food supply in the newly formed Rohingya refugee camps. The refugee management cost is taking a markable proportion of national budget which makes the study of economic impact of the influx more important.

Economic impact by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is an alarming issue for Bangladesh's economy. Tourism, economy and environment of Cox's Bazar are in danger due to the influx of many Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is struggling to provide food and social and humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees in a large number (Parnini, 2013). The adverse effects of this, not only affect in the Cox's Bazar area, but also the national economy with a negative slope. If these Rohingya refugees do not return to Myanmar within near future, it will have an undesirable and unavoidable loss on the economy of the country (Crabtree, 2010). Because of being unemployed the Rohingyas have involved in various types of crime. This problem has taken into a concerning negative impact on the law and order situation in our country, including Cox's Bazar. Now Bangladesh's economy, social and natural environment are not ready to take so much pressure. As a result, the government must have to cope with this issue with great caution and send the Rohingya back home by the help of international community. Moreover, it is high time to study the economic pros and cons of the Rohingya refugee influx in detail to make the government and the international community alert about the real situation.

2. Focus Study

The people of Rohingya have been subjected to decades of systematic discrimination, statelessness and targeted violence in Rakhine Province in Myanmar. There have been significant increases following the violent attacks in 1978, 1991-1992 and again in 2016 (Ibrahim, 2016). It is an alarming issue that the number of Rohingya refugees has increased in Bangladesh particularly since 2016. It has alarming negative impact both on the economic policy and national policy for Bangladesh government. This research paper focuses how Rohingya influx affects the economy of Bangladesh and the challenges faced to overcome this crisis. However, there is availability of data and information to measure the socio-economic burden of this foreign population living in Bangladesh. In the paper also, the increase in the cost of housing the Rohingya crisis, causing damage to the physical and business infrastructure specially in local area, an increase in poverty levels, health services, education and the effects of social protection in the host communities are discussed in detail.

3. Objectives of the Study

The research paper focuses to explore and analyse the negative economic impact by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh considering challenges and adding recommendations. At the same time, addressed the problems of Rohingya refugees and recommended suggestion from economic perspective for solving this economic crisis not only for Bangladesh but also for Rohingya refugees.

4. Research Problem

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fleeing from the persecution of the Myanmar army are in difficult conditions. The Rohingya crisis interrupted society's cohesion and created more difficulties where unemployed refugees continue to make a living in Bangladesh. Because of entering many Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh which is serious threat for the economic development, for the environmental safety and for the tourism sector especially in southern part of the country. The Rohingya crisis has pushed our economy under pressure since 2016.

5. Hypothesis Development

H1: The Rohingya refugees' crisis especially since 2016 has negative impact on the national economy. H2: The socio-economic problems are increasing gradually for this Rohingya refugee's influx to Bangladesh.

6. Methodology & Data Collection

This paper designed based on the descriptive and narrative study to find the negative economic impact by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh with considering, challenges, and Recommendations. Data collection method follows qualitative data collection based on secondary data processing according to some papers, official reports, studies, government reports, and other sources. The main data sources used in this paper are world bank, UNHR, Bangladesh bureau of statistics, UNDP, UN reports.

7. Economic Challenges Regarding Rohingya Refugee Influx

7.1 Increased Cost of Living

Rohingya problem increased both the risks and crimes of the economy in Bangladesh in the long run. Ten months of the current fiscal year will spend an average of about 6 per thousand for each Rohingya. Bangladesh need to expend 712600 Trillion Taka yearly as the expenses of Rohingya refugees. The country is likely to have a negative impact on the economy if they are not repatriated to Myanmar quickly. Rice prices have already risen in Chittagong due to the Rohingya problem (Islam and Ahmed, 2017). When there was a shift in demand curve of the rice because of the sudden increase of the number of populations in that area, there was an adequate increase in the price of rice (Crabtree, 2010). The price of daily commodities is also tending to grow up because of the increased demand of the goods in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. These increases of prices created huge pressure on the national budget to feed at least about one million Rohingya and provide accommodation. Although there is no food crisis in Bangladesh as a whole, but the locals of Cox's Bazar are in danger because of those citizens of neighbouring countries (Alam, 2018). Rising food cost specially in Cox's Bazar area day by day is a noticeable challenge for our national economy. Under these circumstances, international food support is needed not only for the Rohingya, but also for the local population (Khatun & Kamruzzaman, 2018). Table No.1 illustrates the pre and post influx price situation in the general market. The findings are showing that most of the commodities have gone through price hike due to the influx of Rohingya refugees in that areas of Bangladesh.

Table No.1: Price scenario of essential commodities (US Dollars)

Food Item	Findings 1		Findings 2	
	Pre-influx	Post-influx	Pre-influx	Post-influx
Rice	0.38	0.45	0.41	0.45

Flour	0.33	0.41	0.27	0.31
Lentils	1.18	1.10	1.20	1.28
Edible Oil	1.18	1.10	1.0	1.13
Potato	0.26	0.35	0.26	0.35
Sugar (Gur)	0.71	0.73	0.69	0.71
Salt	0.26	0.29	0.31	0.38
Meat (Beef)	5.18	5.88	N/A	N/A
Fish (Fresh Water)	1.53	1.76	N/A	N/A
Other Vegetables (Leafy and Non-Leafy)	0.29	0.35	N/A	N/A

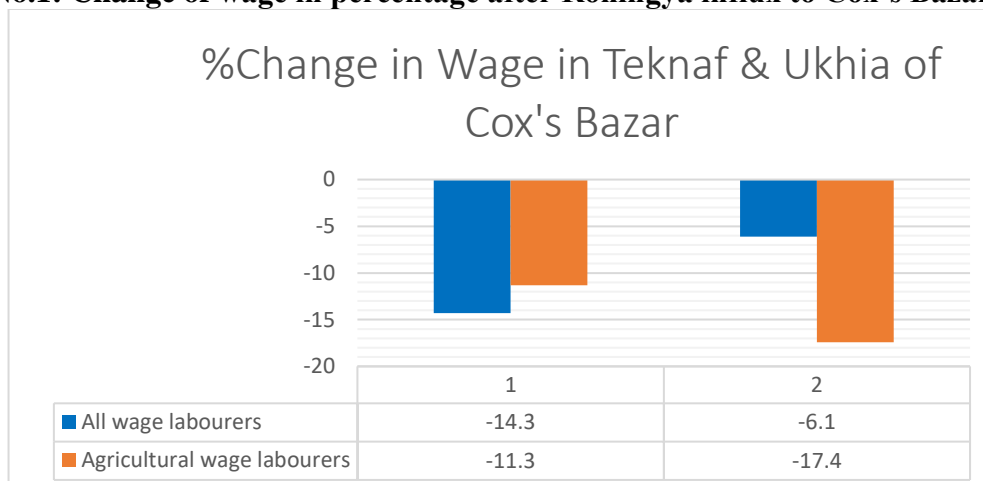
Source: Finding 1: PRI Findings (UNDP household survey 2018), Findings 02: Action Contre la Faim Market Assessment 2017.

7.2 Regional Employment Crisis

Tourism, economy and environment of southern part are in danger because of the migration of many Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh. In addition, Bangladesh has been feeding the large numbers of Rohingya refugees by providing social and humanitarian assistance since September 2017. Various UN agencies and domestic and international organizations are providing food and other assistance to the Rohingya camps. But there are about half million local Bangladeshi people, they are not getting any international support (Myat, 2018). But due to the Rohingya camps, there have been various crises, including rising food prices locally, reduced employment. The review states that the economic growth of Bangladesh has not been able to generate enough employment in recent years. Employment in the industrial sector has declined. The agricultural sector remains unchanged. There has been a great deal of employment in the service sector; however, it is mainly informal. Considering all these issues one of the reasons is that influx of Rohingya refugees in huge number to Bangladesh specially in local area of Cox's Bazar (Alam, 2018).

7.3 Huge Fall Down of Daily Wage

As stated in reports, the immediate impact of Rohingya people nearly one million, the increase in basic prices by 50 percent, the decrease in daily workers' wages, the decline of 2,500 households below the poverty line, reduced reserve forest about 5,500 acres and 1,500 hectares of wild living space have been destroyed. With the support of the international community, the government established temporary settlements for refugees (Islam and Ahmed, 2017). The political process for repatriation has been going on for the last two years and in the meantime, we have seen its negative impact on the host communities. Chart No.1 below showing the percentage change in the wage in the affected areas, where general wage rate has gone downward subsequently after the influx.

Chart No.1: Change of wage in percentage after Rohingya influx to Cox's Bazar region.

Source: UNDP Household Survey (2018)

7.4 Imbalance in Supply and Demands of Commodities

Necessary supplies are scarce in that area. As a result, the normal life of the local population is being disrupted. According to rules the refugees will not be allowed to work. But they have been engaged in various activities, including salt fields, shrimp hatcheries, farming in exchange for a small amount. Local poor workers and farmers have become unemployed gradually (Khan, 2017). Due to scarce of production level and imbalance in supply and demands of commodities in that area has stood as an alarming issue for the economic development of Bangladesh.

7.5 Local Production is Going Downward

The marginal profit of local smaller producers, traders and domestic livestock production is going downward. One survey found that rice prices in post-Harvest Teknaf and Ukhiya were 0.45 USD per kg in May-June 2018 and by 0.070 USD per kg at the national price (0.52 USD in April 2018). Survey data showed that the average wages of all workers decreased from 4.91 before flux to 4.20 USD after flux, or a 14 percent decrease in Teknaf (6 percent in Ukhiya). It is said that the agricultural wage in Ukhiya is falling at a much higher rate. Agricultural wages fell 11 percent in Teknaf apparently. These figures tell us that there is now a large pool of agricultural workers and mostly from the refugee population working close to the camp site (in Teknaf and Ukhiya). Instead of growth of local production of daily goods to meet the rising supply, productions are all same and, in some cases, going downwards even which could be justified by the price hike in the market.

7.6 Noticeable Loss in Tourism Sector

Cox's Bazar tourism industry is at danger if the Rohingya's position is going to be prolonged. In the Cox's Bazar area work opportunities are insufficient. The Cox's Bazaar has become very densely populated area. As a result, the tourism sector of mighty Cox's Bazar is losing its attraction gradually. Locals and the administration are concerned about these problems. But if these problems are being continued, many tourist people can turn away from Cox's Bazar to another tourist destination. Which can bring disaster to our tourism sector with affecting our national economy (Myat, 2018).

7.7 Increased Government Expenditure on Various Sector

The Rohingya undoubtedly has put Bangladesh's economy under pressure. The Rohingya problem have been suffering for recent years not only the pressure but also a burden with extra pressure for Bangladesh's economy. Increased pressure on health services. Again, in the environment where they live, there already have increased risk to healthcare because of lack of adequate sanitation and infrastructure facilities (Alina, 2017). It is said that various fundamentalist organizations are trying to pull in the Rohingya radicals from like-minded youths (Lintner, 2017). It is normal to work in frustration among so many jobless youths. Some militant organizations wanting to exploit this opportunity that can be catastrophic condition for Bangladesh security sector (Khan, 2017). Rohingya youth are already involved in drug trafficking. What Yaba (Madness Drug) enters in Bangladesh most of the (90%) is coming from Myanmar. Yaba (Drug) is now one of the major problems in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, some of the people of this country are giving them such kind of crime opportunity (Karim, 2019). Table No.2 picturing the estimated yearly cost of the government of Bangladesh over different sectors. The cost has been broken down both for the Rohingya community and for the local people.

Table No.2: Sector wise estimated cost of government of Bangladesh (USD million)

Sector	Cost	Cost Breakdown		
		Host	Rohingya	Both/Non-Separable
Education	280.5	113.5	159.0	8.0
Environment	91.2	22.2	57.1	11.9
Transport	82.2	-	40.4	41.8
Shelter	130.9	-	130.9	-
Health	185.4	84.6	85.1	15.7
Social protection	259.6	70.7	188.8	-

Social development	12.5	1.4	3.6	7.5
Urban development	26.8	1.6	24.2	6.0
Disaster risk manageme	36.9	3.3	21.8	11.8
WASH	48.3	13.2	34.6	0.5
Total	1,154.3	310.5	746.5	97.2

Source: *Data Collected from World Bank*

7.8 Burden of Population

As we know Bangladesh is an overpopulated country. Approximately 165 Million people live in this country. The rapid flow of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh began in 2017. According to UNHR approximate about a Million people entered Bangladesh. 75% of fleeing Rohingya refugees in the last crisis came in September 2017 (Karim, 2017). Although the arrival rate has declined significantly - fewer than 1,500 refugees moved to Bangladesh in January 2018 - continuous entry has created the world's most densely populated refugee settlement.

7.9 Overcome Local Economic Problem

The crisis in Arakan affect Rohingya Muslims who had been displaced and took refuge in Bangladesh and human traffickers took the chance along with drug trafficking thus indicates it negatively affected Bangladesh's economy, social structure and security as well. Many harmful effects of hosting many people in Cox bazar areas had a negative effect on the local economy (Islam @ Ahmed, 2017). Damaging effects of hosting large numbers of people in some hill areas had a negative impact on the local economy. The road infrastructure is reported to have damaged nearly \$ 200m in losses.

7.10 Arising Health Disease

There is an increase of transmitted diseases in the Rohingya camp as there is lack of enough medical support. The government and non-government organizations are trying to give proper medical support to the refugees but because of the huge number of populations is becoming so difficult. The Rohingya people are suffering from diseases by polluted water and sanitation problem. There is an alarming increase of patients of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis B etc. Infant mortality and birth death rate have also increased. Besides, people are suffering from skin diseases, tuberculosis as the density of the population is high in the camps. Local inhabitants are also facing difficulties now to get adequate treatment as

before (HAQUE, 2018). As a result of these the government now must expend more on health sector particularly in the southern region.

7.11 Raising Poverty Rate

This poverty has increased by about three percent rate in the host community is something unspoken. We also learned that around 75,000 people in the host community have become more vulnerable to poverty due to the refugee crisis (Karim, 2017). Everyday workers are suffering from the influx of refugees because of the inexpensive labour available from the Rohingya community and the inconvenience and threats faced by 35,000 fishermen and their addicts because fishing is prohibited on the Naf River along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. According to the research, each of these fishing families had an annual income of approximately 70,000 Tk per year which was now completely dried.

8. Findings and Recommendations of this Study

In Bangladesh, the World Bank has granted the US\$ 165 million to the Rohingya refugees for giving emergency services, controlling natural disasters and ensuring social protection from 2015. According to the estimates of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, per capita income in Bangladesh in the fiscal year 2016-2017 was US\$ 1,212. Accordingly, the per capita income about 1 million refugees expected to be US\$ 112 million, or 8 thousand 971 crores. As a refuge, the Rohingya people have no source of income. According to a UN report, the human cost is about 700 dollars per capita. But even if the Rohingya spend, there is no source of income on the legal side. Accordingly, the Government about 1 million refugees and 49 million dollars a year will cost about 3 thousand 992 crores, which is another obstacle to our economic growth in motion. For the Rohingya, the tourism sector in Cox's Bazar and the Highlands already become at risk that has put pressure on Bangladesh's economy frequently. Not only the pressure, but also the burdened with extra pressure on our economy. The pressure on healthcare has also increased. Again, the environment in which they live has increased number of risks to healthcare because of lack of adequate sanitation and infrastructure facilities. The risk to our annual budget management has increased at a concern rate. If the Rohingya from Myanmar stay in Bangladesh in the long run and cannot be sent back later, the risk will be increased in all respects. The indefinite period in the coastal area of the Rohingya has become a threat to Bangladesh's internal and inter-state security. The data and information provided justify the H1 that is The Rohingya refugees' crisis especially since 2017 has negative impact on the national economy of Bangladesh. At the same time the data

& graphs quite strongly support the H2 that the socio-economic problems are increasing gradually for the Rohingya refugee's influx into Bangladesh.

- It seems that the government's overall spending for refugee settlement zones is a burden to the national economy since 2017. As the repatriation of these Rohingya refugees is uncertain still now, the Government of Bangladesh need to come up with a comprehensive and affordable strategy for resource mobilisation.
- How to tackle these problems is a challenge now. Analysts said that the government will have to make long-term plans with the Rohingya. Otherwise, the country may have to deal with difficult economic situations. For instance, table no.3 below shows an estimated cost of the government of Bangladesh for hosting this huge number of Rohingya refugees for said number of years.

Table No.3: Findings on cost of hosting Rohingyas based on repatriation time

Assumptions	Required Years for Repatriation	Cost of Hosting Rohingyas (Million USD)
300 Rohingyas repatriated per day –Population growth and inflation rates adjusted	12 (up to 2029)	9,197
100 Rohingyas repatriated per day -Population growth and inflation rates adjusted	42 (up to 2059)	75,011
- No repatriation -Population growth and inflation rates adjusted	1 (up to 2019)	1,211
	5 (up to FY2023)	7,046
	10 (up to 2028)	17,204
	12 (up to 2030)	22,429

Source: Khatun & Kamruzzaman (2018), *Fiscal Implications of Rohingya Crisis for Bangladesh (Report)*

- Bangladesh is a small country with a finite economy as well as limited resources, extra population and limited agricultural land. As a result, Bangladesh's economic development can be severely hampered by the huge Rohingya influx with its population and high birth rates.

- The emerging Rohingya crisis has many challenges that should be of concern to the Bangladeshi people and the government. Let us not forget that the Rohingya crisis gets trapped in the very fabric of regional and international politics.
- Now, it will be the duty of all, to take effective measures to ensure that the pressure of the Rohingya problem is at a tolerable level in Bangladesh's economy. In order to continue the international assistance and cooperation needed to start the work gradually. Otherwise, it will be difficult for Bangladesh to sustain millions of Rohingya in the long run that might have big negative impact on our national economy.
- To ensure Rohingya people's social, family and economic development local and international humanitarian supports are needed as early as possible. Otherwise the whole region will suffer consecutively. If large numbers of Rohingya people are not repatriated to Myanmar, rehabilitating them will become a very big challenge to our economy. Regional unemployment crisis may also rise at a concerning rate.
- With the support of the international community, the government established temporary settlements for refugees. The political process for repatriation has been going on for the last two years and in the meantime, we have seen its negative impact on the host communities.

9. Limitation of the Study

We had certain limitations while conducting this study. The limitations of the study were as follows:

- The study was thoroughly conducted based on secondary data. There were no primary data collection involved.
- The main sources of the research were from the articles and newspapers. However, there is lack of related and published article regarding this issue.
- The exact data and statistics regarding total spent on the Rohingya refugees could be figured out as it is believed that there were so many aids from the non-government organizations as well as from personal means.
- The exact income statistics of the focused group and area could not be found. However, there are some personal studies of different newspaper journalists concerning this issue.

10. Conclusion

Government authorities, humanitarian agencies, health professionals, environmental authorities and law enforcement agencies assessed that the presence of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh that have serious, long-term negative impact on the society, economy, political, environment of Bangladesh specially in Southern part. The crisis in Arakan was forcibly displaced and took refuge in Bangladesh, impacts have on the economy negatively as well as social structure and security of Bangladesh. According to some Bangladeshi economist the Rohingya crisis has slowed down the rapid economic growth of Bangladesh in some ways.

Bangladesh has already seen rise in the price of daily commodities, decreased wage rate and declining poverty rate in the southern area mainly caused by the influx. The government expenditures have risen in that area excluding the grants from the foreign countries. Studies and statistics are saying that if the Rohingya crisis stays for long-term, the economic burden of the refugees on the country can possibly arise higher. That is why sending back the Rohingya is very important for the economy and politics of Bangladesh. Therefore, immediate necessary steps and a comprehensive solution should be taken to tackle the Rohingya crisis that helps to protect the national economy, local population, local production and Bangladesh. Analysts says that if this continues, the country will be at risk position. As an emerging economy like Bangladesh it is too early and tough to bear the burden of immigrants or refugees therefore it is expected that the problem of the Rohingya people should be solved with mutual understanding immediately so that they can return to Arakan while Bangladesh government can again focus fully on their own economic development goal.

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