



Photo: DRC Afghanistan

# About ADSP

## Introduction

*The Asia Displacement Solutions Platform is a joint initiative of the Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, and Norwegian Refugee Council, which works to contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions for displaced persons across the Afghan and Myanmar displacement axes.*

Welcome to the September 2021 newsletter from the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform. These newsletters are intended to shine a spotlight on some of the issues being tackled by our members, and the programmatic work done to improve outcomes for persons affected by displacement. In addition, the newsletter provides updates on global or regional processes which may otherwise go unexplored.

Each newsletter contains articles from members in ADSP focus countries, exploring interesting programme developments and regional migration trends. As we move into the tail-end of 2021, we encourage you to share ideas or information that you would like to see addressed.

The newsletter relies upon content created by member organisations, and everyone is welcome to contribute. If you have an idea for an article, on any subject, please feel free to contact me to discuss. We would love to publish overviews of your activities, interviews with staff, and photos which give an idea of the work being carried out in the field.

These newsletters are intended to improve information-sharing between ADSP member organisations, and to highlight the work of the platform more publicly.

## A message from the ADSP Manager

### Acute humanitarian needs across the region necessitate collective action

*By Evan Jones, Asia Displacement Solutions Platform Manager*



Over the past few months, the environments within which some of our members are operating have changed dramatically. With the fall of the previous government in Afghanistan, humanitarian needs across the country are surging. Afghans are experiencing acute needs related to food security, access to healthcare, livelihoods, protection, and education. In total, more than half of Afghanistan's 40 million population need urgent humanitarian support. With winter just around the corner – as well as the effects of COVID-19, drought, and a faltering economy – the work of the Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee and Norwegian Refugee Council is required more than ever.

Since evacuations ceased from Kabul International Airport almost a month ago, attention from the humanitarian community is now firmly centered on the tens of millions of Afghans remaining in the country that require life-saving support. Committed to 'staying and delivering', ADSP members and the humanitarian community at-large are working in overdrive to pivot their approaches to be able to effectively respond to the new reality. With Afghanistan teetering on the verge of a humanitarian and economic crisis, it is essential that humanitarian actors – including national civil society actors – are provided with the access and support needed to fulfil these immediate needs.

Further south in Bangladesh and Myanmar, our members continue to work tirelessly in challenging conditions to deliver much needed humanitarian support. Four years on since the most recent influx of Rohingya to Cox's Bazar, the humanitarian needs remain high. Education, healthcare, and skills-building initiatives amongst many others, are essential to provide Rohingya in the camps with access to fundamental rights and much needed services. These challenges have been compounded by monsoon rains and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, further reinforcing the need for coordinated actions and predictable support across humanitarian actors.

In some respects, the attainment of durable solutions may appear as distant as ever. However, despite humanitarian needs increasing, and protection spaces for refugees remaining incredibly limited, there remains much that we can do. Through partnerships, collective action, complementary programming and strategic ways of working, there are numerous spaces by which we can continue to contribute to policy and legislative improvements. Through our evidenced-based approach that places research at the heart of ADSP's thinking and action, we can continue to contribute to better ways of working, improved responses, and better outcomes.

Finally, I wish to thank all members, partners and colleagues – especially those in Afghanistan – for your tireless work at this time. We look forward to continued engagement in the months ahead, as we work harder than ever to contribute to the realization of durable solutions for refugees within our region.

Evan Jones  
ADSP Manager



Photo: NRC

## ADSP Rohingya Advocacy Project

In July 2021, ADSP was proud to kick-off a two-year project entitled '*Protecting Rohingya Refugees in Asia (PRRIA) 2021-2023*'. Working in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council, the Geutanyoe Foundation, and the Mixed Migration Centre Asia, the project will work towards improving protection spaces for Rohingya refugees within Southeast Asia.

The project brings together the combined expertise and comparative advantages of project partners to provide an integrated protection intervention including monitoring, research & analysis; direct protection programming; advocacy, coordination & mobilisation of relevant stakeholders; as well as anticipatory preparedness through Institutional linkages and advocacy. It is expected that the project will improve coordination, alongside strengthen concerted advocacy interventions with regional and national stakeholders, capitalising and supporting the implementation of existing regional and national policy and legal frameworks.

As the project begins to ramp-up in the coming months, ADSP and partners look forward to engaging with a broad swathe of stakeholders both within and across the region. With nearly 900,000 Rohingya in Bangladesh and 150,000 registered Rohingya in Malaysia, work towards creating opportunities for durable solutions is critical. With very little prospect of safe, voluntary, and dignified return for the Rohingya to Myanmar in the near future, it's crucial that the international community, regional governments, civil society, and Rohingya refugees themselves work together to ensure that all Rohingya can access adequate protection, fundamental rights, and opportunities to thrive.

## Reviving a regional approach to the Rohingya

*Adam Severson, Myanmar & Bangladesh Specialist at the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform*



More than four years have passed since Myanmar security forces began "clearance operations" targeting ethnic Rohingya in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State. Purportedly a response to attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), an ethnic insurgent group, these operations were the culmination of mounting rights abuses and restrictions disproportionately directed at Rohingya communities. More than 40% of area villages were partially or completely destroyed, and Rohingya were displaced on a scale not seen since the 1970s. In the two weeks following the start of clearance operations, more than 300,000 Rohingya crossed into Bangladesh seeking refuge. By the end of 2017, that figure had more than doubled. There are now an estimated 1.1 million Rohingya in Bangladesh, with nearly 890,000 sheltering in camps around Cox's Bazar. Another 150,000 or more Rohingya refugees are scattered across the region, the majority in Malaysia.

None of the region's major host countries are party to the international convention on refugees, and their protection of Rohingya has been inadequate and inconsistent. Malaysia, for example, permits the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to register and assist some Rohingya but has detained others incommunicado for long periods. India too has allowed thousands of Rohingya refugees to provisionally remain but insisted it has no legal obligation to do so. In April, India's highest court refused to halt the deportation of some 170 Rohingya men, women, and children regardless of the risks they face in Myanmar. Despite opening its doors to fleeing Rohingya, Bangladesh has also enacted policies that restrict their movement and effectively limit access to humanitarian assistance, education, and livelihoods.

Many Rohingya have expressed a desire to return to Myanmar once it is safe and the government has granted them the rights, privileges, and protections owed to citizens. Voluntary return has also been -- and remains -- the preference of host countries in the region. Yet little has changed to make return a reality. Since 2018, Myanmar has slow-walked commitments under a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR to create conditions for return, and stalled implementation of a bilateral repatriation agreement with Bangladesh. The Myanmar military's takeover of the country in February has made safe and dignified return unrealistic for the foreseeable future.

Against this backdrop, it is urgent to ask how the international community, regional governments, civil society, and Rohingya themselves could better work together to ensure Rohingya refugees have access to adequate protection, fundamental rights, and opportunities to thrive. While voluntary return may remain the long-term goal, other solutions are needed in the interim.

It is time to revive efforts to develop a regional response framework that brings together host governments, resettlement countries, donors, civil society groups, and Rohingya communities. Such a framework would aim to improve Rohingyas' access to protection by fairly distributing responsibility across the region and within the international community. Host countries would permit Rohingya refugees to lawfully remain and allow them access to work, education, and essential services. In exchange, donors could help finance support provided by governmental agencies and/or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and resettlement countries might accept an agreed upon number of refugees willing to relocate elsewhere. Donors could -- and should -- also contribute to initiatives that benefit host communities.

Civil society and Rohingya representatives ought to play a central role in the development and implementation of a regional response. A failing of the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), the regional framework created to address the movement of Vietnamese asylum seekers in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was that it limited the participation of civil society and refugee-led organisations. Largely on the outside, these groups had few opportunities to advise, support, or monitor the activities of host governments, resettlement countries, or UN agencies.

Under a regional framework to respond to Rohingya displacement, national and international NGOs and refugee community-based organizations could provide direct services to refugees; build the capacity of host governments to understand and support Rohingya communities; and help hold governments, UN agencies, and each other accountable for their commitments.

To be sure, reaching agreement on a regional response framework will be immensely challenging. In 2018, UNHCR brought together regional governments, relevant UN agencies, members of the international community, and representatives of civil society to discuss how to improve regional coordination to address Rohingya displacement. A laudable effort, the so-called "Solidarity Approach" was short lived because key participants were not clear about the objectives nor committed to the process.

Even with a clear goal, winning buy-in from countries in the region to a new round of dialogue will be difficult -- at least short term. As the communique from the recent Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting confirms, voluntary return continues to be the priority of regional governments despite worsening violence and instability in Myanmar. The region's escalating Covid-19 outbreak may also make it an inopportune time to exhort host governments to devote attention and resources to improving protection for refugees. Donor countries too -- some still battling rising Covid cases -- are unlikely to urgently invest in a regional response.

Yet it is not too early to begin discussions. The status quo is unacceptable, and without willingness to pursue a more ambitious regional response, it is unlikely to change. Now is the time for international and national civil society organisations, Rohingya representatives, and UNHCR to work together to chart a path forward. A first step would be to develop and disseminate consistent messaging on what a regional framework might entail.

As fighting continues to grip Myanmar, and voluntary return remains impossible, host governments and donors should be urged to give serious consideration to a response that includes solutions beyond return -- resettlement, local integration, and other longer-term temporary protection arrangements. Displaced Rohingya are almost certain to remain in host countries for years to come. Acknowledging this reality and equitably sharing responsibility will better serve regional governments and Rohingya refugees.

*The full article can also be viewed on the Bangkok Post website [here](#).*

## As international troops depart Afghanistan, the threat of landmines remains

By Evan Jones, Manager at the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform and Daniel Bertoli, Head of Mine Action Programme at DRC Afghanistan

**International military forces leave behind a country facing growing insecurity and levels of violence, a faltering economy and multiple humanitarian crises.**

Buried amongst the dozens of pressing challenges in Afghanistan is an issue that rarely receives the international spotlight: the prevalence of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Often referred to as ‘hidden and indiscriminate killer[s]’, landmines threaten all segments of society, and are a fundamental barrier to long-term solutions to conflict. From June 2020 to May 2021 alone, Afghanistan witnessed 673 fatalities and 836 civilian injuries from landmines and explosive ordnance – a shocking number of lives ended or adversely impacted. Since the outbreak of war in Afghanistan in 1979, antipersonnel mines have been used by all parties to conflict. From Herat to Jalalabad and everywhere in between, landmines have been laid with the sole aim of maiming and killing.

Beginning in the late 1980s, humanitarian organisations have to date cleared more than 81 percent of the known minefields and battle areas. This represents over 3,300 square kilometres of land released for productive use to 3,189 communities. Despite this progress, it is estimated that close to 4,000 identified hazards remain across the nation. As fighting and insecurity increase, this number will continue to rise, endangering lives, affecting livelihoods, and precluding access to long-term solutions.



Photo: DRC Afghanistan

### The human cost of explosive remnants of war

Laleh (not her real name), a single mother from Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan, is all too familiar with the risks presented by landmines, and the devastating toll they can take on families and communities. In June of this year, Laleh and her family were forced to flee their home when armed opposition groups attacked their village. A few weeks later, after returning when it was deemed safe, her eldest son and breadwinner of the family stepped on a landmine hundreds of metres from their house. He died instantly. Laleh and her family were not told that the village had been mined. With nowhere else to go, and with ongoing fighting in the area, Laleh and her remaining six children have sought refuge in one of Kandahar’s internal displacement camps. Now completely reliant on humanitarian assistance, they worry about what the future holds.

### Today's returnees are tomorrow's IDPs

According to data from the International Organization for Migration, more than 860,000 Afghans returned from neighbouring countries in 2020. As of August 2021, a further 679,000 Afghans have returned, primarily from Pakistan and Iran. For many returnees, it is not possible to return to their former places of residence due to security concerns or lack of livelihoods. Instead, they move to other areas in search of stability and access to employment.

Because they are likely less familiar with local conflict patterns or community safety practices, returnees are at greater risk of injury or death from explosive hazards than other civilian populations. To combat this risk, humanitarian organisations continue to dedicate significant resources to clearing land and providing mine risk education to newly arrived returnees. Such information is essential and saves countless lives each year.



### What is needed from the international community?

In addition to immense personal costs — death, injury, anxiety and psychological trauma — the presence of landmines and other unexploded ordnance hinder Afghanistan's ability to rebuild its society and economy. Mines prevent the cultivation of arable land and block commercial and residential development. Moreover, landmine victims receive limited access to government social or economic support programmes. As such, their care falls to immediate or extended family members, stretching financial resources and straining relationships.

To mitigate these risks and achieve the Afghan government's commitment under the Ottawa Treaty to rid the country of anti-personnel mines, increased financing from the international community is essential. Over the past ten years, funding for demining operations has dropped dramatically, and Afghanistan is well behind its targets. It is critical that Afghanistan — especially in the context of the growing insecurity and turmoil — receives additional funding from international donors to clear landmines and educate at-risk populations of the dangers of explosive hazards. Only through a combination of humanitarian assistance and mine action programmes, will people like Laleh have an opportunity to move freely, and rebuild her life.

This article originally appeared in TRT World [here](#).

## In Bangladesh, recurring disasters compound plight of Rohingya refugees and demand better preparedness

By Sadia Rahman, Communications Officer, Norwegian Refugee Council, Bangladesh



In 2017, to accommodate hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine State, the Bangladesh government allocated more than two dozen square kilometres of land in Cox's Bazar for temporary camps. Four years on, as displacement of Rohingya has become protracted, the camps—overcrowded and constructed on the sides of hills—have remained provisional. In a region prone to extreme weather, refugees continue to live in temporary shelters made of bamboo and tarpaulin—surviving one catastrophe to the next, caught in a cycle of loss and rebuilding.

Predictably, this year's monsoon season has brought additional destruction and death. In late July, heavy rains hit the coastal area and continued for weeks. In the first few hours alone, at least 300 small and large landslides were recorded; 19 people were killed, three of them children. Over the next few days, the Norwegian Refugee Council and partners assessed that over 21,000 refugees had been impacted, with many displaced from their homes. Sixty thousand Bangladeshis in the surrounding area were also affected.

Bangladesh is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and restricts the movement of Rohingya out of the camps, even in emergencies. Consequently, refugees impacted by the flooding were unable to leave. Some were forced to live in submerged shelters waiting for help to arrive. Women-led households, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities were particularly affected by restrictions on movement.

In the first hours, NRC coordinated rapid response and embedded with the Protection Emergency Response Unit (PERU) to assess damage. In the weeks since, services have been accelerated and expanded to include both refugees and the immediate host community. To date, NRC and partners have helped over 23,500 refugees and members of the host community.

Notwithstanding successful emergency responses, the process of rebuilding will be time-consuming and costly. Long after flood waters recede, conditions will remain rife for the spread of waterborne diseases. Shelters must be repaired, battered infrastructure reconstructed. The narrow pathways within and between camps have to be de-sludged to ensure people can access aid and health facilities.

The recent floods are yet another reminder that emergency responses cannot take the place of preparedness and planning. For months before the floods—and fires earlier in the year—government restrictions ostensibly meant to combat COVID-19 curtailed humanitarian access. Protection monitoring was deemed unessential, and education programmes were halted. When refugees reported in March, that the barbed wire fence surrounding camps had kept people from escaping a massive fire, humanitarian agencies called for less securitization and greater freedom of movement. These calls went unheeded by the government.

Many disasters in Cox's Bazar are cyclical. As the large-scale presence of Rohingya refugees moves into the fifth year, it is imperative to assess immediate and long-term risks and improve preparedness measures to limit future destruction of property and loss of life. It is unrealistic to expect that refugees will voluntarily return to Myanmar soon, and planning for inevitable disasters to come is both economical and humane.

Preparedness measures, too, must be extended to protect affected host communities, which have been underserved by government programs and international aid. A recent report by the Norwegian Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee and Dhaka University—with support from ADSP—examines tensions between Rohingya refugees and local Bangladeshis, and provides concrete recommendations for humanitarian actors, donors, donor governments, and the Government of Bangladesh. Disaster readiness programming could be another important avenue for promoting social cohesion among refugee and host communities.



## REGIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Afghanistan: when migration is the only lifeline available all efforts must be ensured to provide safe passage

*By Abdullah Mohammadi, Hanh Nguyen & Jennifer Vallentine, Mixed Migration Centre Asia*

The recent withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan after 20 years of foreign-led intervention has left the country grappling with intensified violence, conflict, and humanitarian crises. Over the past few weeks, resurgent Taliban forces have taken over the country at lightning speed, displacing hundreds of thousands of people across Afghanistan, and forcing many to flee in search of safety and security to countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey.

With the takeover now all but complete, Taliban rule is fast becoming a reality for the people of Afghanistan and 20 years of fragile progress, particularly with regards to women and girls' rights, is steeped in uncertainty. Despite the Taliban's calls for Afghans to remain in the country, chaotic scenes at Kabul airport and at land borders show the fear that people face as they scramble to flee the country via any means available to them.

Even in the months and weeks leading up to Taliban takeover, migration journeys have become more costly and dangerous as demand for smuggler services have increased, and routes have become more remote in order to avoid detection from hardline immigration officials and to bypass Taliban-occupied border check points. With land and air routes currently closed, regular routes out of Afghanistan are no longer an option. Therefore, it is vital that all efforts focus on ensuring a swift reopening to allow those stuck in Afghanistan, and at risk of retribution by state and non-state actors, to leave by the safest means possible.

While migration will continue to be the only lifeline available for many Afghans, limited legal protections, prospects and opportunities await in neighboring countries. As the crisis reaches a critical point, return to Afghanistan is also no longer feasible, leaving many – both those newly displaced from Afghanistan, as well those already living in neighboring countries – with limited options and in situations of protracted displacement and exile. While EU governments raise concern over potential rising numbers of Afghans entering their borders, the reality is that the large majority of displaced Afghans will continue to be hosted within the region. Emphasis should thus be on addressing the unfolding protection crisis in the region – with increasing funds allocated to host countries for urgent humanitarian assistance and support – rather than on a potential increase of asylum seekers to Europe. Further, neighboring countries and the EU, must cease deportations, and pushbacks at their borders while providing migration pathways and resettlement options for those stuck in desperate situations.

### **An ecosystem of displacement drivers – intensified conflict, economic downturn and environmental disaster**

The commencement of inter-Afghan Peace Negotiations in September 2020 raised hopes for an improvement in the situation for civilians within Afghanistan. However, despite intermittent meetings between the Afghan government and Taliban, the peace talks failed to provide any notable success. Instead, violence has increased significantly and the Taliban has expanded its controlled areas throughout the country, ultimately claiming victory on the 15 August. In the first half of 2021, UNAMA recorded a 47% increase in civilian casualties, compared with the same period last year. With the Taliban now controlling the whole of Afghanistan, violence against civilians is escalating, with women and girls among the most vulnerable.

The intensified conflict in Afghanistan has triggered an increasing number of internally displaced people. Since January, around 390,000 civilians have been newly displaced due to conflict, mostly in the north and northeast of the country. These numbers have only surged in recent days as many have sought to escape newly occupied Taliban territories. According to a statement by the IOM on 10 August 2021, Afghanistan remains the country with the largest internally displaced population in Asia with over 5 million IDPs, many of whom live in cramped and unsanitary conditions due to conflict and natural disasters.

On top of the recent events and rising conflict, Afghanistan also faces economic and environmental disasters adding to the complex ecosystem of drivers spurring migration. Afghanistan's population is facing a growing array of environmental problems with more frequent and severe floods, landslides, and droughts. In a country where a significant percentage of the population lives in rural areas and depends on farming to survive, droughts have a devastating effect. According to a report by IFRC in August 2021, over 80% of Afghanistan is exposed to serious drought, further worsening the socio-economic hardships facing Afghans across the country.

Meanwhile, some estimated 16.9 million people – more than 40% of the population – face crisis or emergency level food insecurity. In April, aid agencies said 120 of Afghanistan's roughly 400 districts – more than a quarter – are considered “hard to reach”, due to remoteness, active conflict, or multiple armed groups vying for control. People in these areas, including some 3.3 million children, are deprived of accessing essential services, such as healthcare, education, and job opportunities. These numbers will only increase as the crisis within the country worsens and international aid organizations have even more limited ability to access affected populations.

### **Migration continues despite increasing barriers and pushbacks**

In the context of conflict, economic depression, and the COVID-19 pandemic, migration remains a key survival strategy. In the weeks leading up to Taliban takeover around 30,000 people were reportedly fleeing Afghanistan every week to neighboring countries of Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and for some farther afield to Turkey and the EU.

The increasing urgency for many Afghans to leave the country has led the price of human smuggling services to rise significantly in the previous months. Reports from enumerators of the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) indicate that smuggling services in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat have significantly increased in price over the last quarter. For example, while the cost of a smuggler facilitated journey from Zaranj, Afghanistan to Tehran, Iran was about 180 USD in January and February, it increased to 250-300 USD in July. Likewise, the fee for a Turkish visa arranged by smugglers and intermediaries increased from 2,500 USD in January to over 5,000 USD by mid-July.

Further, countries across the region are increasingly clamping down, in some cases violently, in order to curb the movements of Afghans to and through their borders. Turkey, for instance, is securitizing its border with Iran by building a three-meter high concrete wall in an attempt to stop the irregular entry of Afghans. In Iran, the government has deployed military forces along its border with Afghanistan and in Europe, countries like Greece continue to push back refugees and migrants trying to enter via sea. It is crucial that routes remain open and that Afghans seeking safety are not pushed back.



### **Return is no longer a safe option**

After a long halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the deportations of Afghans from Europe resumed in late 2020 as EU member states argued that big cities in Afghanistan were considered 'safe'. However, the recent deteriorating security situation and take over by the Taliban has made EU countries reconsider. In early July, the Afghan government asked EU countries to stop the deportation of Afghan nationals for three months amid concerns the country could not support their return and reintegration. On 12 July, Finland became the first EU country to announce a freeze on the forced returns of Afghan asylum seekers, shortly followed by Sweden. Others have been slower to respond, initially continuing deportations of rejected Afghan asylum-seekers, arguing that stopping returns would send "a wrong signal" and motivate more to leave Afghanistan for the EU, but shortly after more countries, including Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands announced suspending forced returns.

In 2020, more than 865,000 Afghans returned or were deported to Afghanistan primarily from Iran and Pakistan, amid the pandemic. Despite intensified conflicts and civil unrest, the trend continues, with deportations and returns in the first six months of 2021 alone totaling 628,000. Upon return, most face struggles to reintegrate, finding decent work, and face rising levels of debt. 4Mi survey data conducted by MMC between 16 February and 25 April 2021 with 706 Afghan returnees found that more than half of all respondents perceive themselves not to be economically reintegrated after return, with major challenges including finding decent work, debt, and violence. A third of the respondents also reported that they had to migrate internally to a new location in search of job opportunities, to escape violence or to access services. Among women returnees, a considerable proportion reported facing increased crimes, domestic violence, and sexual violence after their return. Returnees are struggling with these challenges while having limited access to assistance with MMC's 4Mi survey finding that only a very small proportion of returnees received assistance and support upon return. These issues faced upon return may intensify under new authorities at the national and sub-national levels and thus deportations should not continue as return is no longer a safe or sustainable option.

### **Durable solutions needed for the many trapped in protracted displacement and exile**

The mixed migration movements of Afghans to neighboring countries and beyond has not only been the direct consequence of Afghanistan's crises but also a coping mechanism for many seeking safety and better job opportunities. As Taliban takeover, conflict, economic instability, and environmental disasters progress on multiple fronts across Afghanistan, migration is seen as the only viable option – and a vital lifeline – for many people in Afghanistan. As the MMC 4Mi survey has shown, even prior to the Taliban takeover, almost half of those returned to Afghanistan reported that they were planning to re-migrate either to their previous country or to another country.

With the increasing securitization of borders, including violent pushbacks in most destination countries, protracted exile, with its associated risks, is a bleak reality. Unless fast and effective migration pathways and resettlement options are provided, irregular and increasingly dangerous migration will be the final straw in the exacerbated humanitarian disaster facing Afghans in the region and beyond. Until states within the region and internationally offer appropriate legal protections and durable solutions for the millions of Afghans, the humanitarian crisis will only continue to grow, trapping millions in situations of protracted displacement.

### **About MMC:**

The Mixed Migration Centre is leading source of independent and high-quality data, research and analysis on mixed migration. The MMC aims to increase understandings of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. The MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

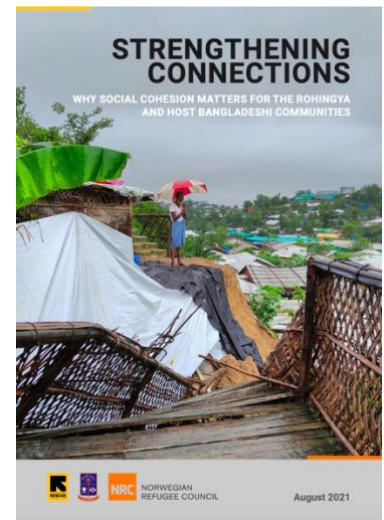
In Asia MMC's 4Mi survey is currently conducted in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Afghanistan, with plans to expand to Turkey and Thailand in the coming year. For more information and access to our data please see 4Mi interactive or reach out to [Jennifer.vallentine@mixedmigration.org](mailto:Jennifer.vallentine@mixedmigration.org)

# ADSP member publications

## *'Strengthening Connections – why social cohesion matters for the Rohingya and host Bangladeshi communities'*

In August 2021, ADSP members the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) – in collaboration with Dhaka University – published the [joint report](#) *'Strengthening Connections – why social cohesion matters for the Rohingya and host Bangladeshi communities'*. The report maps out social tension across five areas i.e. environment and ecology; labour market; the cultural & political landscape; land; and the presence of the humanitarian community.

In 2017, atrocities by the Myanmar military drove over 850,000 Rohingya across the border into Bangladesh, where they continue to live in temporary settlements today. Over the past four years, as conditions inside the refugee camps have deteriorated, the host community in Teknaf and Ukhiya—who generously welcomed refugees in 2017—have grown wary of their protracted presence. Intensifying environmental, economic and social impacts linked to continued Rohingya displacement have raised tensions, and studies since 2019 have documented declining social cohesion between refugee and host communities.



Between November 2020 and February 2021, qualitative data was collected through two streams—through interviews and focus group discussions with both the host and refugee community conducted by researchers from Dhaka University; and through an analysis of existing briefs, policy papers, and research material produced by NRC's ICLA programme and IRC's Protection programme in Bangladesh. In July, a further round of remote interviews was conducted with NGO practitioners and policy leaders to triangulate findings.

This report highlights numerous key findings related to social cohesion in Bangladesh, most notably;

- **Tensions remain between refugee and host community** regarding access to land and livelihoods, and regarding the impact of refugee settlements on the local environment.
- While some host community members oppose the presence of refugees, a much larger portion of respondents are either supportive, ambivalent, or balanced in their views.
- **Covid-19 has magnified differences** and misgivings between refugees and the host community. Over one year of rolling lockdowns, many (in both communities) have lost jobs and access to livelihoods. Indebtedness has increased, as has hunger and frustration.
- Within both refugee and host communities, perceptions of respondents who identify as female vary from those of respondents who identify as male. Across issue areas, female respondents focus on material needs, deprivations, and barriers to social cohesion; while male respondents identify anxieties around gender roles, cultural considerations, and perceived threats to morality.

### **Statement: Rising instability necessitates immediate suspension of deportations to Afghanistan**



In early July, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations from the Government of Afghanistan requested to EU states that deportations to Afghanistan cease for a period of three months. This request was made in response to the growing instability and the reduced absorption capacity by the government.

On 16 July, the ADSP issued a [statement](#) supporting this request from the Government of Afghanistan. The statement outlined the growing humanitarian needs within the country, and the lack of improved conditions on the ground to support sustainable, safe and dignified return.

## ADSP Briefings & Advocacy

Throughout Q3, ADSP has continued to advance its advocacy agenda related to Afghan displacement, with a series of private and public virtual briefings in Geneva, Brussels and Washington DC. With the support and engagement of members IRC, NRC and DRC, the ADSP held two briefings on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan on 25 August (Washington DC) and 9 September (Brussels/Geneva), as well as participated in the UN Afghanistan Conference on 13 September.

The briefing with the [Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission](#) was entitled '[The Status of Humanitarian and Protection Efforts in Afghanistan](#)' and was organized to provide field-led analysis and recommendations in relation to the evolving humanitarian situation and need for civilian protection in Afghanistan. ADSP was represented by the Country Directors from the three member organisations, and they provided updates on the latest developments on the ground, discussed challenges to providing humanitarian aid & services, and identified areas where congressional engagement could play a critical role.



Comprising both a private and public space for dialogue, the engagement with the Tom Lantos Commission for Human Rights was the first such engagement for the ADSP. As our work continues to expand, and the situation in Afghanistan continues to develop, the ADSP looks forward to continued engagement within Europe and the USA to inform the work of policy makers and donors.

A recording of this briefing can be accessed [here](#).

ADSP is committed to initiating and engaging in dialogue with member states and other stakeholders to continue our push towards improving the lives of affected persons. With durable solutions at the heart of what we do, we will continue to advance discussions at the local, national, regional, and international levels to ensure stronger and more sustainable outcomes for refugees and displaced persons.