



Photo: NRC Afghanistan // August 2022

# 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 aims to contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions for displaced persons across the Afghan and Myanmar displacement axes.*

Welcome to the June 2023 newsletter from the ADSP, our second newsletter of the year. These newsletters are intended to spotlight some of the issues being tackled by the ADSP, and the programmatic work done by members to improve outcomes for persons affected by displacement. In addition, the newsletter provides updates on global or regional processes of which we are engaged.

Each newsletter contains articles related to ADSP focus countries, exploring interesting programme developments and regional migration trends. As we continue into 2023, we encourage members and external stakeholders alike to share ideas or information that you would like to see addressed.

These newsletters are intended to improve information-sharing between ADSP member organisations, and to highlight the work of the platform more publicly. We hope you find the content useful and that it supports your work or spurs future ideas and collaborations.

For any questions related to the ADSP, please don't hesitate to contact the ADSP Specialist, Paul Vernon at [Paul.Vernon@adsp.ngo](mailto:Paul.Vernon@adsp.ngo).

## A message from the ADSP Secretariat

### Working towards collective regional responses

As we approach the halfway mark of 2023, ADSP is proud to say that our work is continuing along at a consistent pace. In just a few short months, we have continued to deliver upon our research agenda, contribute and drive new dialogues around Afghan and Myanmar displacement, and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders regionally and globally. This has contributed to the ever-evolving policy dialogue spaces nationally and regionally, and, has raised the profile of our core populations of concern.

The situation in Afghanistan remains extremely challenging, with ongoing humanitarian concerns for large swathes of the population. For Afghans in neighbouring countries, the situation also remains challenging. To address this, ADSP has continued to produce several products to support the donor community, NGOs, international organisations and host governments to strengthen the protections and services available to Afghans. This included the publication of expert commentaries, briefing notes and public opinion pieces. Many of these papers are presented later in this newsletter. ADSP is excited to continue this work in the coming months, especially as we support the Support Platform member states for the SSAR through our ongoing Afghanistan workstream.

In Myanmar, the situation inside the country remains extremely volatile with conflict across numerous parts of the country. This has resulted in additional human casualties, as well as people continuing to flee internally and across borders. As of March 2023, it was estimated that there are more than 1.7 million IDPs across the country. In response, ADSP continues to support displaced persons from Myanmar in our programming in Thailand, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh through our projects. Most notably, in May 2023 we released two research reports in Malaysia on the impact of detention on the families of detailed Rohingya, and, the potential economic contribution of Rohingya to the Malaysian economy. Both pieces were launched in Malaysian Parliament and have brought renewed vigor and discussion around these two important issues.

On the global scale, ADSP continues to position ourselves for participation and active engagement in the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. ADSP is preparing a range of research pieces as it relates to Afghanistan, as well as events and briefing papers related to displacement from Myanmar. We look forward to building out these pieces of work more substantively in the coming months, and supporting host states and donors to more effectively support refugees with access to long-term solutions.

In other news, throughout May and June 2023 ADSP has experienced several staffing changes. In May 2023, we welcomed Paul Vernon to the team as ADSP's new Regional Specialist. Joining us from MedAir Afghanistan, Paul has taken over the reins from Adam Severson. In addition, In June 2023 ADSP also bid farewell to ADSP Specialist Iffat Anjum and ADSP Manager Evan Jones. Iffat had driven the localization agenda for ADSP over the past 14 months, and Evan led ADSP with grace, humility and passion since 2020. Both will be missed and have supported ADSP towards becoming a regionally recognised entity working towards solutions for Afghans and displaced persons from Myanmar alike. The recruitment for the next ADSP Manager is still underway.

As always, we wish to thank all members and stakeholders for your ongoing engagement and support.

Warmly,

ADSP Team



## PRRiA project updates (April - June 2023)

'Protecting Rohingya Refugees in Asia' (PRRiA) is an ECHO-funded project that began in July 2021. Project partners include the Danish Refugee Council, Geutanyoe Foundation, HOST International, Jesuit Refugee Service – Indonesia, Mixed Migration Centre – Asia, and ADSP. ADSP leads the project's advocacy and coordination result, which fosters coordinated regional advocacy, promotes regional responses to Rohingya displacement, and supports national-level advocacy in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

On 11 May 2023, ADSP facilitated the third quarterly, hybrid meeting of the Regional Rohingya Advocacy Forum co-organized with IOM and UNHCR, and kindly hosted by at UNHCR RBAP's offices in Bangkok. The meeting addressed preparations for the December 2023 Global Refugee Forum, the Bangladesh-Myanmar returns pilot exercise, and discussed the Bali Process with the Regional Support Office. The next meeting of the Forum is planned for August 2023.

On 25 May 2023, ADSP and the Geutanyoe Foundation organised a closed-door roundtable to launch two recently completed reports. The event brought together stakeholders from government, Members of Parliament, experts, and civil society to disseminate and discuss the findings, as well as to discuss more broadly how the Malaysian government can move forward on improved protections for Rohingya. The first report, "[\*Impact of Prolonged Immigration Detention on Rohingya Families and Communities in Malaysia\*](#)" focuses on how Rohingya families and communities have been impacted in the immediate and longer-term by Malaysia's immigration detention policies. It also provides strategic recommendations for increasing access to protection and services for Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, not least the need for Alternatives to Detention (ATD) and a refugee-, survivor-centred approach in policies and responses at both national and regional levels. The second report, "[\*Understanding the current and potential contribution of Rohingya refugees to the Malaysian economy\*](#)" focusses on gaining a better understanding of Rohingya refugees' existing livelihood strategies and challenges in Malaysia. The research focuses on employment profiles and the challenges Rohingya refugees face in accessing livelihoods and decent work, as well as their potential to contribute to the Malaysian economy. A follow-up event will be held with the EU Delegation in Malaysia in August to further disseminate the report findings and recommendations to embassies and I/NGOs in Malaysia.



On 21 June, ADSP launched a discussion paper on ["Promoting Regional Responses to Rohingya Displacement in Southeast Asia"](#). This discussion paper examines how humanitarian actors can strategically promote regional responses to protracted Rohingya displacement to better protect Rohingya refugees and better serve the interests of host countries. The paper distils lessons from past efforts to promote regional responses and suggests recommendations for actions that could be taken both within existing policy frameworks such as ASEAN and the Bali Process, and towards new policy processes such as the development of a regional support platform for Rohingya and multilateral cooperation on resettlement and complementary pathways.

**Mentorship support for Rohingya refugee community-based organisations in Malaysia for building research and advocacy capacity**

The capacity building and mentorship support to Rohingya refugee-led community-based organisations in Malaysia came to an end in June 2023. The mentorship support and capacity building training was provided as part of the PRRiA project phase-I. As part of this activity, Rohingya Society in Malaysia (RSM), and Rohingya Women Development Network (RWDN), were supported with research and advocacy capacity building.

Following a training on research and advocacy in July 2022, the CBOs developed their own research and advocacy project entitled Understanding the Current and [Potential Contribution of Rohingya Communities to Malaysian Economy](#) (as mentioned above). The CBOs collected data throughout December 2022 and conducted data analysis and report writing in January 2023, with support from ADSP and MMC. Based on the findings of the research, an "Advocacy Planning Workshop" was organised on 14-15 January 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where the CBOs developed an advocacy strategy to effectively disseminate the findings and recommendations from the study and engage key public and private stakeholders in policy discussion. The report was disseminated in a closed-door briefing event on 25 May 2023, in the presence of the members of All-Party Parliamentary Group for Refugees and relevant government stakeholders.

PRRiA PARTNERS:



PROJECT DONOR:



European Union

## Supporting Humanitarian and Refugee Protection (SHARP) project updates (April-June 2023)

ADSP, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee and the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), also remains engaged in supporting national and regional level advocacy initiatives through a one-year grant from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). With a focus on research, advocacy, and capacity-strengthening initiatives for non-Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, the project is centered around India, Malaysia, and Thailand. Some of the notable achievements and engagements over the past three months include:

### Malaysia

#### **Roundtable Discussion: Realising the Right to Education for Refugee and Stateless Children – *'The Power of Education to Reclaim Lost Lives and Futures'***

A roundtable discussion was held on 10 May 2023 in Kuala Lumpur on the right to education for refugee and stateless children in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Malaysia. The discussion aimed to:

- a) exchange ideas with the relevant governmental agencies on how to improve access to education among refugee and stateless children;
- b) lay the foundation for developing a roadmap towards the inclusion of refugee and stateless children in the national education system, recognising how this would contribute to the sustainability of the socioeconomic system in Malaysia and Southeast Asia;
- c) identify and highlight the avenues for enhanced inter-agency cooperation in addressing the barriers to the realisation of the right to education of refugees and stateless children.

The discussion was attended by 27 government officials from education, immigration, women development, and policy ministry/unit of Malaysia. The Sarawak Minister of Women, Childhood and Community Wellbeing, Dato Sri Fatimah Abdullah presented best practices of providing access to education to stateless children in Sarawak. During the breakout session, the challenges, learning, and best practices were shared and deliberated upon by the group. A brief policy recommendation is being finalized and further discussion on the dissemination of the report and engaging with relevant stakeholders will be carried out in collaboration with SUHAKAM and UNHCR.



### **Follow up Meeting with Refugee Led Organisations (RLOs) on Advocacy Plan Implementation**

The meeting intended to address the challenges, gaps and lessons learned from the implementation of advocacy initiative by the refugee led organisation's advocacy working group. The working group reached out to UNHCR to discuss further on the RSD processes in Malaysia for Burmese community which has been pending since 2019. However, the response to the request for a private meeting was declined and the advocacy group has developed a contingency plan to reach the advocacy goals. Meanwhile, the group requested support on further capacity building training and hiring of an advocacy officer who will be looking into the implementation of advocacy activities of RLOs. SHARP Asia project team took note of the challenges, gaps and needs. Support and guidance will continue to be provided during the remainder of the project period.



### **Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on Refugee Mental Health in Malaysia**

The SHARP Asia project organised a multistakeholder consultation, in collaboration with Health Equity Initiatives (HEI), on refugee mental health in Malaysia which highlighted on substantial barriers accessing mental health care and services. Held on 19 May 2023, the consultation was attended by 39 contributors from the EU delegation, civil society, International NGOs, embassies, academia, refugee community leaders and members. The consultation intended to:

- a) to bring together stakeholders working on refugee-related matters to strengthen the understanding of refugee mental health issues in Malaysia.
- b) to generate discussions, identify problems, and explore solutions on issues relating to refugees' access to mental health care, the mental health of refugee children, and shelter for refugees with psychological and psychiatric problems.
- c) to identify key messages and develop recommendations on the above issues.
- d) to strengthen connections, networking and sharing of best practices between relevant stakeholders.

Two panel discussions were held focusing on '*Access and Barriers to Health Care*' and '*Child and Adolescent Mental Health*'. Following the panel discussions, there was one breakout group discussion in which participants discussed the challenges and recommendations of: (i) access and barriers to health care, (ii) refugee child and adolescent mental health, and (iii) shelter for refugees with psychiatric and psychological problems. The compilation and findings of this multi-stakeholder consultation will supplement the development of a research study on refugee and asylum seekers' access to mental health. This will be published in late 2023.



**INDIA**

**Stakeholder Engagement with UNHCR India on Refugee Status Determination (RSD)**

ADSP’s implementing partner in India, Migrant & Asylum Project (MAP) held a bilateral meeting with UNHCR India on 18 April 2023 to advocate for access to refugee status determination for all displaced persons from Myanmar in India. MAP also has been making ad-hoc referrals to UNHCR for persons from Myanmar who require immediate medical attention and financial support.

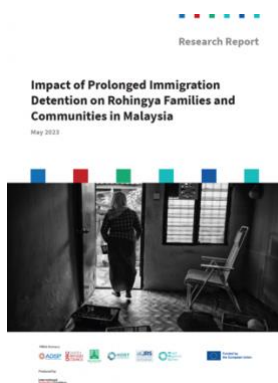
**Building Capacity of RLOs to advocate with local and national governments**

As an outcome of the capacity building training for RLOs in New Delhi, MAP has supported a local RLO to draft a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs on the issue of exit permits. At present, exit permits are needed for refugees to exit India to avail third-country resettlement options.

## ADSP Publications & Media

### Impact of Prolonged Immigration Detention on Rohingya Families and Communities in Malaysia

In May 2023, as part of the PRRiA project, ADSP published a report entitled *‘Impact of Prolonged Immigration Detention on Rohingya Families and Communities in Malaysia’*.



In 2017, a violent security crackdown in Myanmar’s Rakhine State triggered the largest exodus of Rohingya in recent history. At the time, the Malaysian government took a vocal stance against the persecution of the Rohingya, positioning themselves as supportive and sympathetic to their plight. However, as growing numbers of Rohingya have sought irregular means of travelling to Malaysia to reunite with family and community members, levels of public and political tolerance in the country have waned. The Malaysian government has increasingly adopted a securitised and frequently ad-hoc approach in responding to Rohingya and other refugee communities. This has included more boat pushbacks, more frequent immigration enforcement raids, and the immediate, arbitrary, and indefinite immigration detention of many Rohingya in Malaysia.

The research focuses on how Rohingya families and communities have been impacted in the immediate and longer-term by Malaysia's harsh and indefinite immigration detention policies. It also provides strategic recommendations for increasing access to protection and services for Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, not least the need for ATD and a refugee-, survivor-centred approach in policies and responses at both national and regional levels, in line with international protection and human rights standards.

The research methodology comprised a multi-method qualitative research approach using desk research, secondary data collection from case intake forms, and semi-structured interviews with key informants from refugee-led organisations, CSOs, think tanks, faith-based organisations, and human rights organisations.

While the research focused primarily on Rohingya in Malaysia, key informants and desk research indicated that many of the findings, especially experiences related to policies and processes of immigration detention, are likely applicable to most refugee communities in Malaysia.

### Key Findings

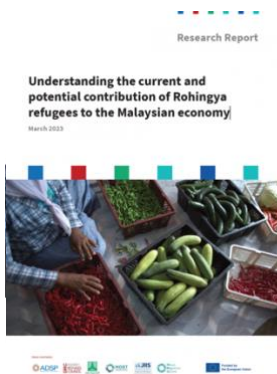
- Rohingya refugees in Malaysia are not a homogenous group. Their risk of detention, direct and indirect experiences of detention, and ability to access services and support are shaped by their duration of residence in Malaysia; family origins and status in Myanmar's Rakhine State; and intersectional factors such as gender, age, medical vulnerabilities, socioeconomic background, and documentation status.
- All refugees are at risk of arrest and detention under Malaysian immigration law, which permits arbitrary and indiscriminate arrest and detention. However, Rohingya are at higher risk of arrest and detention than other refugee communities, predominantly due to their visibility as the largest refugee community in Malaysia.
- Rohingya refugees who have travelled to Malaysia from Bangladesh are at increased risk of prolonged detention compared to Rohingya refugees who have travelled directly from Myanmar, or have been living in Malaysia long-term, pursuant to an internal immigration document.
- Malaysia's immigration detention policies have had medium- and long-term impacts on Rohingya families and communities. Rohingya in detention are at significant risk of physical and psychological abuse that can lead to cumulative trauma and mental health challenges. For children specifically, immigration detention can have a detrimental and long-lasting impact on development and physical and mental well-being.
- Family members of detained Rohingya also experience significant psychological distress. This distress is underpinned by concern for their family members' wellbeing, increased fear and anxiety about risk of arrest, and lack of access to UNHCR documentation and the protection it provides.
- Detention has a profound impact on family structures by separating or preventing reunification of families, and indirectly causing the breakdown of familial relationships.
- Immigration detention disproportionately affects women as they experience detention in intersecting and gendered ways, due to patriarchal norms within Rohingya communities and the social and economic positions women occupy.
- Malaysia's immigration detention policies and practices demonstrate policy incoherence at a national level, as well as at regional and international levels, which negatively affect Malaysia's international reputation and standing.
- Immigration detention is harmful to individuals, families, and communities, is not an effective deterrence measure, and comes at significant financial cost to Malaysian taxpayers and the Malaysian economy. Further, there is no legal basis to deport stateless persons such as the Rohingya.
- ATD are beneficial to both refugees and governments as they support outcomes such as improved health and wellbeing, fulfilment of human rights principles, and effective migration governance. ATD are also more cost-effective than immigration detention.



• A comprehensive and sustainable approach to responding to Rohingya and other refugee communities requires coordination and collaboration across Malaysian Government ministries, departments, and other government actors. Further, close collaboration with civil society, RLOs, UN agencies, and regional and international CSOs is needed to strengthen the government’s response to end harmful immigration detention policies and practices.

The full report, including findings and recommendations can be found in Malay [here](#) and English [here](#).

## Understanding the current and potential contribution of Rohingya refugees to the Malaysian economy



As of November 2022, Malaysia hosted 182,990 refugees and asylum seekers, 106,120 of whom were Rohingya. However, Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol and does not have a legislative framework for refugee protection. Notwithstanding barriers to legal employment, a UNHCR study found that 60% of refugee adults in Malaysia were employed. The large informal employment sector in Malaysia, which constituted 23% of total employment in 2021, provides livelihood options for refugees. However, informal employment makes refugees susceptible to high risks of exploitation, including verbal and physical abuse by employers, partial or non-payment of wages, and lack of protection in high-risk work environments.

Through collaboration between Rohingya-led CBOs and PRRiA project partners, participatory research was conducted to gain a better understanding of Rohingya refugees’ existing livelihood strategies and challenges in Malaysia. The research focuses on employment profiles and the challenges Rohingya refugees face in accessing livelihoods and decent work, as well as their potential to contribute to the Malaysian economy, should their legal status and access to the labour market be formalised.

The [study](#) presents evidence collected by the Rohingya community to inform policymaking on issues related to Rohingya refugees’ work rights in Malaysia.

### Key Findings

#### Skills

1. Knowledge of Malay language was most regularly reported (22%) as a useful skill in the job market, followed by construction skills (21%) and grass cutting skills (13%).
2. The top five skills respondents reported interest in learning for better income-generation were: electricity and wiring (16%), sewing (14%), English language (12%), air-conditioner servicing (11%), and business or accounting (9%).

#### Livelihoods

3. Male respondents reported benefitting from relatively better livelihoods in Malaysia as their unemployment rate dropped from 30% prior to coming to Malaysia to 2% in Malaysia; the unemployment rate for female respondents decreased slightly from 26% to 20%.
4. In Malaysia, the most common economic sectors respondents were working in were services (47%), construction (23%), and self-employment (10%). Before coming to Malaysia, most who were working had been engaged in agriculture and fishing (23%), self-employment (11%), and services (7%).

#### Access to information

5. 39% of respondents approached family or friends and 31% went to community organisations for information about job availability and job vacancies in Malaysia. Other popular avenues were going door-to-door (31%) and approaching local Malaysians (29%).

Risk and challenges

6. 87% of the 158 respondents who had worked during the last five years in Malaysia reported experiencing protection incidents at their workplace. The most common exploitation experienced at the hand of employers, and relate to pay.

7. Arrest or detention (66%), bribery or extortion (61%), and confiscation of UNHCR card (40%) or other IDs were the three most common protection incidents perpetrated by the authorities.

Assistance

8. Although most respondents were employed, many continue to live in precarity. 95% indicated the need for livelihood assistance, especially financial assistance, but most (87%) reported not receiving any in the last 12 months.

**Key Policy Recommendations**

For humanitarian and aid organisations:

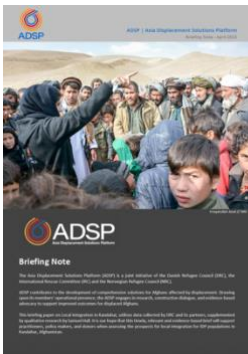
- i. Formulate livelihoods programming that actively mainstreams gender, builds on the community's strengths, integrates community needs, and promotes sustainability and resilience.
- ii. Facilitate access to information about livelihood opportunities and protection assistance.
- iii. Advocate for the legal rights to work.

**For policymakers in Malaysia:**

- i. Formalise refugees' rights to work through engagement with refugee community, private sectors, Malaysian citizens, civil society organisations and international organisations.
- ii. Promote labour protection and fair compensation for informal employment.

The full research report can be found in English [here](#) and in Malay [here](#).

**ADSP Briefing Note: Local Integration for IDPs in Kandahar? Insights from the field**



Despite the reduction in conflict after August 2021, many drivers of displacement in Afghanistan persist or have been exacerbated, leading to Afghans moving in search of protection or remaining in protracted displacement. At the same time, discussions led by the De facto Authorities (DfA) on durable solutions continue to centre on returns. This brief seeks to highlight prospects for local integration in Kandahar, one of the urban areas in Afghanistan that remains a hope for protection for many displaced. According to 2022 data from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), there were close to 250,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) settled in Kandahar province, representing about 30% of the province's population. Within this specific urban population are IDPs from Badghis, and other protracted IDP groups. This brief will focus on both groups and elaborate on why IDPs from Badghis are often in more precarious situations compared to other IDPs in Kandahar's informal settlements.

Nearly all urban IDP settlements in Kandahar are informal settlements. Previously, there were 12 formal settlements but many closed due to the relocation or return of IDPs to their areas of origin. While certain IDPs returned following the fall of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the end of active fighting, other IDPs were pressured to return. Most remaining informal settlements are adjacent to host communities, and located in the 7th, 8th, 9th and 12th districts of Kandahar where data collection for this brief took place.

"The IDP families that we have met, the situation of their shelter, healthcare facilities and other life's needs are not good at all. They are mostly in survival mode and don't have much money to pay for their other expenses except for being able to barely pay for their food. Their main concern is food nowadays. In a situation like this, it is not possible to consider other things. Their main objective is getting food to eat. Most of them are living in muddy houses and in tents. Their homes are not that good at all." – KII 1

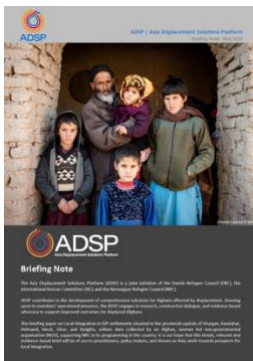
Local integration has long been championed as one of three possible durable solutions to displacement. However, despite a concerted push for increased recognition of, and support for local integration, it is frequently overlooked by governments and policy makers, who favour return as the preferred solution. As early as twenty years ago, experts lamented the fact that local integration is too often a forgotten solution. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions was published in 2010 to provide guidelines for local integration, alongside resettlement in a third location, as the primary pathways to achieving durable solutions.

It is in the context of severe challenges facing Afghanistan and its people that Samuel Hall, DRC and ADSP are delivering this brief on Local Integration in Kandahar, which puts forward data collected by DRC and its partners. It is our hope that this timely, relevant and evidence-based brief will be of use to practitioners, policy makers, and donors as there are currently, multiple conversations on durable solutions happening in Afghanistan, focusing on returns, as well as on the prospects for local integration. This brief addresses specifically the latter.

This brief will review existing evidence on key dimensions and criteria identified by the IASC and that are foundational to “solutions analyses” in other regions of the world as well, as seen through the work of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) in the Horn of Africa. By documenting where information exists and where the gaps lay, it is the hope of this research brief to present areas for consolidated efforts and joint data collection to explore the viability of durable solutions in the Afghan context.

Please access the research brief [here](#).

## ADSP Briefing Note: Local Integration? Insights from the field, and from a local NGO working on improving the resilience of displacement affected communities



According to IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix *Baseline Mobility and Emergency Community-Based Needs Assessment, Round 15* conducted between March and April 2022 close to 5.9 million persons were deemed to be internally displaced in Afghanistan. Almost one-third (31%), were displaced between January 2021 and April 2022. The analysis produced to date in the country shows that following years of conflict and political instability, the economic and social structures of communities across Afghanistan have been severely tested, putting into question what durable solutions can mean in this context. Various and overlapping shocks – economic crisis, humanitarian crises, natural disasters and political instability – have tipped millions of Afghans into extreme poverty and into displacement.

Research by Samuel Hall for IOM in 2022 showed that community health is on the decline – meaning that communities do not have the resources to protect their own, with concerning signs of decreasing social cohesion and community protection systems. The WCLRF report confirms that community structures and local systems have been damaged, losing the capacity to cope with shocks, events, or emergencies that impact the lives of men, women and children.

While internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living under emergency conditions, they also face long-term challenges that impact their overall protection, for current and future generations, and their search for solutions adapted to their needs. This is why the NRC R3 consortium's focus on recovery and resilience was one 'key' to the durable solutions conversation in Afghanistan.

There are opportunities for engagement, beyond humanitarian aid, and for advocacy with donors to support IDPs in the short and long term. This conversation is aligned with the United Nations Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement at the global level, as Afghanistan has been identified as one of the priority countries to transform the way in which internal displacement is addressed.

While the De facto Authorities (DfA) favour returns to areas of origin, all three durable solutions – including local integration and resettlement or relocation – need to be considered for a solutions-oriented approach, inclusive of

the voices of the displaced. IDPs will likely remain in host communities for longer than expected from a cycle of displacement. It has also been documented that social support structures in the country are still fragile and are not able to support the reintegration or returns of IDPs at a large scale. Interim and emergency measures that support the resilience and local reintegration of IDPs, are needed alongside designing and implementing longer term plans.

It is in the context of severe challenges facing Afghanistan and its people that Samuel Hall, NRC and ADSP are delivering this brief on Local Integration? Insights from the field, and from a local NGO working on improving the resilience of displacement affected communities which puts forward data collected by an Afghan, women led NGO, supporting NRC in its programming in the country. It is our hope that a timely, relevant and evidence-based brief will be of use to practitioners, policy makers, and donors as there are currently, multiple conversations on durable solutions happening in Afghanistan, focusing on returns, as well as on the prospects for local integration. This brief addresses specifically the latter.

Please see the full briefing note [here](#).

## ADSP Op-Ed: Calls on donor group, led by Japan and Switzerland, to break deadlock in support for Afghan refugees

*Afghanistan is burdened by multiple crises, and there is an urgent need for innovative collective global action. The upcoming Global Refugee Forum in December 2023 is a key opportunity to break the current deadlock. Najeeba Wazefadost and Evan Jones write that a strategic group of 15 donors – the so-called Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees – where Japan and Switzerland are key members, is strategically placed to re-ignite regional support for displaced Afghans, both in and outside the country.*



The situation in Afghanistan is dire. More than 20 million Afghans are projected to be food insecure in 2023, some 80 per cent of school-aged girls and young women are out of school, and almost 70 per cent of the country's population are unable to meet their daily needs. This state of desperation of millions of Afghans is forcing many to leave their country and look for livelihood opportunities, security, and respect for basic human rights elsewhere. Yet, most displaced Afghans face challenging conditions in host countries, with limited access to essential services, an inability to access the legal right to remain, and risk of deportation.

While the challenges are immense, there exist two avenues through which real progress can be made. One is the upcoming Global Refugee Forum, to be hosted by the UN refugee agency UNCHR.

The inaugural Global Refugee Forum (GRF) held in 2019, brought together 3,000 delegates, including governments, the private sector, academia, civil society, and refugees. It aimed to galvanize political support and to mobilize financial, material, and technical assistance for host countries and refugees globally. The event solidified the notion of comprehensive responses as a solution for refugee displacement. It was broadly successful in building interest, commitments, and pledges to action to improve conditions and protection of refugees. Though most of the pledges on Afghanistan made at the time have remained unfulfilled, the second GRF which takes place in December provides a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the search for more long-term support for Afghan refugees.

Beyond pledging, a significant outcome of the forum in 2019 was the establishment of a donor group, the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees. It was tasked with pursuing increased collaboration on long-term support and solutions for displaced Afghans. Today, the grouping has 15 members, including the World Bank, and the governments of Switzerland, Japan, Qatar, Turkey, the United States, and the European Union. Chaired by the EU, the donor platform has yielded some positive results, including the operationalization of groups on livelihoods and education in Pakistan.

Looking forward to the gathering this December, the Support Platform is the international community's best-placed body to garner support and make tangible change in the lives of displaced Afghans in neighbouring countries. The grouping has a mandate to collectively identify and work towards priority and long-term needs such as education, health, livelihoods, and resilience programming. These donors are well-positioned to allocate resources for the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan for Afghanistan and the Regional Refugee Response Plan, and to engage with the NGO community to ensure that responses are coordinated and cohesive.

Furthermore, the Support Platform can address the issue of Afghan displacement from a regional perspective. By working through national channels, support can be mobilised for Afghans across the region through a comprehensive suite of funding, technical support, and engagement. It is important that the donor group addresses the root causes of displacement, expands access to basic services, supports climate action, and creates livelihood opportunities for displaced Afghans and host communities.

We appreciate that donor governments are forced to tread cautiously when it comes to engaging in Afghanistan and some neighbouring countries. Financial sanctions, liquidity challenges and an inability or unwillingness to engage with the Taliban limit the scope, amounts, and types of available funding. Solutions to Afghan displacement are complex, and there are no silver bullets. Nevertheless, we believe that donors within the Support Platform can and should create the space needed to mobilise support for Afghans at home and in neighbouring countries.

For example, the Support Platform could establish a common understanding of the challenges facing the Afghanistan economy and the steps needed to stabilise it by bringing together the UN, private sector, NGOs, community-based organisations, microfinance institutions, UN member states and multilateral development banks. They could foster partnerships across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to better deliver access to basic services, build resilience and improve community services.

To be more effective, the Platform should be more inclusive of NGO stakeholders and better recognise refugees' own perspectives. Some of these adjustments are already underway.

In the lead up to the Global Refugee Forum, the Platform could evolve into an even stronger vehicle of change. There is an enormous opportunity for states to come together and make joint pledges to support displaced Afghans. Both short-term humanitarian needs and longer-term development approaches are needed. Targeted support for host countries, which currently host upwards of 6 million Afghan refugees, that allows for better access to education, healthcare and livelihoods could be a gamechanger for displaced Afghans, and for the trajectory of Afghanistan in the long-term. Pledges could also include supporting registration efforts for newly arrived refugees, expanding resettlement pathways, supporting a widening of education services in host countries, and furthering access for refugees to public health services.

With only seven months to go before the Global Refugee Forum, member states in the Support Platform should, in consultation with refugee and IDP-led organisations and NGOs, develop innovative and meaningful pledges for action. In particular, Switzerland and Japan, in their respective roles as co-host and co-convener of the Global Refugee Forum 2023, have the unique ability to champion the cause of displaced Afghans.

The Global Refugee Forum is an important milestone for the Support Platform to work towards, as it expands its base of stakeholders, and seeks to deliver a range of tangible initiatives to meet the needs of millions of displaced Afghans, particularly women and girls. Let's not allow this opportunity to pass us by.

This article was originally published in [Development Today](#).

## ADSP Op-Ed: Developing Transitional Solutions for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

*With long-term solutions likely to remain elusive, it's time to make serious efforts toward improving Rohingya lives in the short term.*



For around 1 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar living in Bangladesh, sustainable solutions such as safe and voluntary return to their homeland, large-scale resettlement in third countries, or local integration in Bangladesh will remain elusive for the foreseeable future. It is essential that national policymakers, international organisations, nongovernmental organisations, and donors promptly work to strengthen the resilience of displaced Rohingya and host communities through investments in education and livelihoods – and in doing so, lay the foundation for long-term solutions to displacement.

Rohingya refugees have been forced to flee from Myanmar to neighbouring countries for decades. The last mass exodus in August 2017 sent over 700,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh to join the roughly 300,000 already seeking refuge there. While the government of Bangladesh and host communities were initially sympathetic to the plight of Rohingya refugees, this goodwill has since waned as the refugee population has grown, outnumbering the host population. Many in the host community feel that the lives of local Bangladeshis have been adversely affected by increased living expenses, reduced wages and employment opportunities, environmental degradation, and increased pressure on public resources and services.

Similarly, many in the Rohingya refugee community also harbor frustrations and dissatisfaction, especially about their living situation in temporary shelters in congested camps. Bangladesh is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, and only officially recognises Rohingya who arrived before 1992 as refugees. Rohingya who arrived after 1992 are instead termed as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals. While all Rohingya have access to shelter and humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh, they still cannot access formal education or sustainable housing, and have no right to work. Other challenges also exist in relation to inadequate healthcare facilities, protection, and security.

### Limited Existing Access to Services

While there is no formal right to work, there have been sporadic efforts to provide livelihood opportunities for Rohingya in the camps as well as host communities. These have generally been delivered through short-term projects working on self-reliance, for example, producing agricultural products or jute bags. However, without formal employment rights, refugees still rely almost entirely on humanitarian aid and informal small-scale economic activities inside and outside camps. There is limited opportunity for them to work toward long-term self-reliance.

Rohingya children, who constitute almost half of the refugee population, live without access to public schools or other formal education opportunities in Bangladesh. Notably, in November 2021, UNICEF in partnership with the government of Bangladesh launched the Myanmar curriculum pilot. This positive step has seen 10,000 Rohingya children receive standardized education that follows the Myanmar national curriculum – a move that will help them if and when they can return to their homeland. However, it is unclear if the Myanmar government will accredit this education for children taught under this curriculum.

Against the challenging backdrop in the camps, many Rohingya have opted to take the desperate step of seeking irregular and often dangerous means of leaving Bangladesh in search of stability and opportunity. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 39 boats carrying over 3,500 Rohingya refugees – most embarking from Bangladesh and Myanmar – attempted sea crossings in 2022, resulting in nearly 400 deaths at sea. This is a sharp increase compared to the approximately 700 Rohingya who attempted crossings in 2021.

In addition to the difficult conditions for Rohingya in Bangladesh, because of the adverse conditions persisting inside Myanmar, the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of Rohingya to Myanmar is yet unlikely for the majority of Rohingya refugees in the short or medium term. The government of Bangladesh has made several attempts to facilitate repatriation of refugees arriving since 2017, but none has succeeded – not least because Rohingya refugees have concluded that conditions of safety and security are not present. The military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 has only worsened the situation.

Although a Myanmar delegation came to Bangladesh in March and restarted the verification process for returning Rohingya to Myanmar, there is no significant change in the political circumstances in Myanmar. Likewise, there is no reason to hope that any repatriation at this point will be safe and voluntary. A 20-member team of Rohingya who visited Rakhine State this month reported that they would not return without citizenship and security guarantees.

### Limited Resettlement Opportunities

In 2022, the U.S. government announced a resettlement program for Rohingya in the camps. Though not specified in the announcement, the expectation is that several thousand Rohingya could resettle to the United States from Bangladesh this year. While the program is a significant and welcome initiative, it remains insufficient in its current form. In the spirit of solidarity and responsibility sharing, resettlement countries should advance commitments to resettle larger numbers of Rohingya from Bangladesh.

However, it is equally important to acknowledge that the resettlement of all 1 million Rohingya – or even most of them – from Bangladesh is unrealistic. Instead, expanded resettlement should be but one element of a more comprehensive plan among humanitarian actors and the government of Bangladesh around education, livelihoods, and skills development to provide a transitional solution for Rohingya. Approaches that combine humanitarian and development programming have not been adequately put into action by authorities, who remain wary of creating conditions they feel will encourage more Rohingya to come to Bangladesh.

### How to Move Forward

A combined humanitarian-development approach is needed to design and deliver programs that meet immediate needs, reduce risks and vulnerabilities, and build resilience for both refugees and host communities. For example, a five-year plan could serve to meaningfully increase connections between humanitarian and development activities and secure reliable and adequate resourcing. Such a plan could improve human capital development, including formal education, skills development, and livelihood opportunities, and help Rohingya prepare better for their life in Myanmar when the conditions are suitable for returns.

To promote livelihood opportunities for refugees and host communities, for example, the government of Bangladesh could issue special identification documents and work permits allowing refugees to work in specific areas, such as special economic zones or shipyards. Special arrangements could likewise be made with private sector entities to employ refugees in selected areas and sectors. Promoting livelihood opportunities for refugees will help authorities to cut down illegal economic activities and related crimes affecting the camps and surrounding areas. Development partners can provide support to the government and private sector to build the capacity of Rohingya and host community workers by providing technical skills-based training opportunities.

A collective emphasis on and move toward medium-term or transitional solutions would serve both refugee and host communities by reducing social tension between the two communities and building resilience. To turn the refugee community from a burden to an asset for Bangladesh, and to better prepare Rohingya for eventual return or resettlement, a medium-term plan also needs to ensure access to certified accelerated and formal education opportunities for refugee children, leading to recognized qualifications that will help them secure future employment. A plan could also expand educational opportunities for host communities.

To deal with the protracted Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, it is essential to move toward transitional solutions for the refugees. The government of Bangladesh must be realistic; hundreds of thousands of Rohingya are likely to remain in Bangladesh for years or longer. Allowing refugees opportunities to develop skills and support themselves will empower them and disincentivize irregular and dangerous boat movements, human trafficking, and drug smuggling. And it need not come at the expense of the vulnerable host communities. Humanitarian and development programming and financing under a multi-year plan can and must also serve the aspirations and interests of local Bangladeshis.

This article was originally published in The Diplomat, and can be accessed [here](#).

## ADSP Op-Ed: World Refugee Day 2023 - Giving hope away from home to refugees



SHARP Asia released an opinion piece titled "Nurturing Hope Away from Home for Malaysia's Refugee Communities", written by SHARP Project Asia coordinator, Huzan Waqar. With the observance of World Refugee Day 2023, the theme "Hope Away from Home" holds profound significance, resonating deeply with the challenges and aspirations faced by millions of displaced individuals worldwide. The article delves into the remarkable stories of refugees in Kuala Lumpur and sheds light on the transformative power of refugee-led

organizations (RLOs) in nurturing hope within these communities.

The article highlights the inspiring journey of Myu Tsaw, a resilient leader from a refugee-led organization in Kuala Lumpur. Forced to flee his home in Myanmar due to civil war, Myu Tsaw's indomitable spirit led him to pursue education, become a volunteer teacher, and engage in projects that address pressing social issues. His story exemplifies the unwavering resolve of refugees in overcoming adversity and utilizing education and advocacy to protect the rights of their communities.

The op-ed aimed to raise awareness on the challenges faced by refugee communities and by fostering collective action through the establishment of advocacy working groups by refugee-led organizations which can amplify their voices and drive positive change.

For full article as published in the Daily Star: [Click Here](#)



# ADSP Member Publications

## Roundtable Discussion: Protecting Rohingya Refugees: Addressing the Evolving Protection Needs


DRC Bangladesh organised a roundtable discussion on *“Protecting Rohingya Refugees: Addressing the evolving protection needs”* in May 2023, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The objective of the roundtable discussion was to share information about protection risks and the changing nature of protection trends, identify sustainable solutions to best address concerns, and to reflect on the importance of protection monitoring. The event brought together experts and stakeholders to identify the protection needs of refugees and develop innovative solutions to provide better safety, security, and assistance to the Rohingya community and to identify scope for collaboration among protection stakeholders. The panel discussion emphasized the criticality of nuanced protection monitoring based on gender and diversity disaggregated data to inform evidence-based decision-making and advocacy efforts. The report can be found [here](#).

## DRC Briefing Note: Principled Humanitarian Action in Afghanistan



DRC Afghanistan’s briefing note on Principled Humanitarian Action in Afghanistan was published in June 2023. The briefing note highlighted the role of humanitarian principles (humanity, independence, impartiality, and neutrality) in operational decision-making and coordination efforts, in light of the challenges facing humanitarian actors in Afghanistan.

### Introduction



Introduction

Afghanistan is one of the most challenging environments for aid operations today. Aid workers face numerous barriers, including increasing bureaucratic restrictions, security-related and operational practical pressures, and other obstacles which are exacerbating needs and challenges for humanitarian actors. Despite the obvious, the world cannot ignore the deepening crisis, and much can still be done to assist principled humanitarian programming.

In light of the challenges facing the humanitarian community in Afghanistan, this study investigates how humanitarian principles and other value factors inform operational decision-making and coordinated action. It also looks at the extent of decisions, particularly concerning the free effect, operational space and principled programming. The objective of the research is to help aid organizations and donors reflect on the challenges and what might be done differently. This note concludes by outlining concrete measures that can improve principled humanitarian action in Afghanistan.

This briefing note is based on a broader study that investigates the dilemmas facing humanitarian actors in Afghanistan and the role of value factors in providing aid in these challenging contexts. The research included qualitative interviews with over 170 aid actors, service beneficiaries, and authorities in Kabul and four provinces (Balkh, Herat, Paktia, and Kandahar).

This study focused on a specific in-time, from October 2022 through March 2023. This includes the ban on Afghan women working for the UN. This study is the first high-impact research to explore dynamics.

**Terminology:**

- **Authorities** is used here when referring to the central government or individual actors.
- **Taliban** refers to the group that assumed control of Afghanistan in August 15, 2021.
- **Insurgency** refers to the Taliban after 2021 and until August 15, 2021.
- **Republic** refers to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the government established in late 2001 and which collapsed in August 2021.

It explores how these principles and other value factors guide actions on the ground and how they are perceived by humanitarian actors. Amid the complex crisis and policy environment in Afghanistan, humanitarian principles may cause frictions, and compromises might be required to achieve overarching objectives or outcomes. Acknowledging that humanitarian principles are part of a broader spectrum of values guiding humanitarian work, as many actors engage in various types of work beyond pure humanitarian aid, the briefing note emphasizes that recognizing the diversity of actors and their interests is crucial in providing effective humanitarian support. The full briefing note can be found [here](#).

## NRC Report: Barriers to Afghanistan’s critical private sector recovery



The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Afghanistan published a report on *“Barriers to Afghanistan’s critical private sector recovery”* in April 2023, focusing on the challenges faced by the Afghan business community. The report highlights the importance of a stable economy, a thriving private sector, and development assistance to complement humanitarian efforts. The report draws attention to the misconceptions about international sanctions hurting private sector businesses in the country, emphasizing the need for improved awareness and reduced over-compliance regarding sanctions to help the economy recover. The report also notes that despite exemptions to sanctions, private businesses still face restrictions on financial services, which hinders their operations. The report urges major governments, financial institutions, UN agencies, and regional actors to work together to take the necessary steps to stabilize and support Afghan businesses and the economy. The full report can be found [here](#).