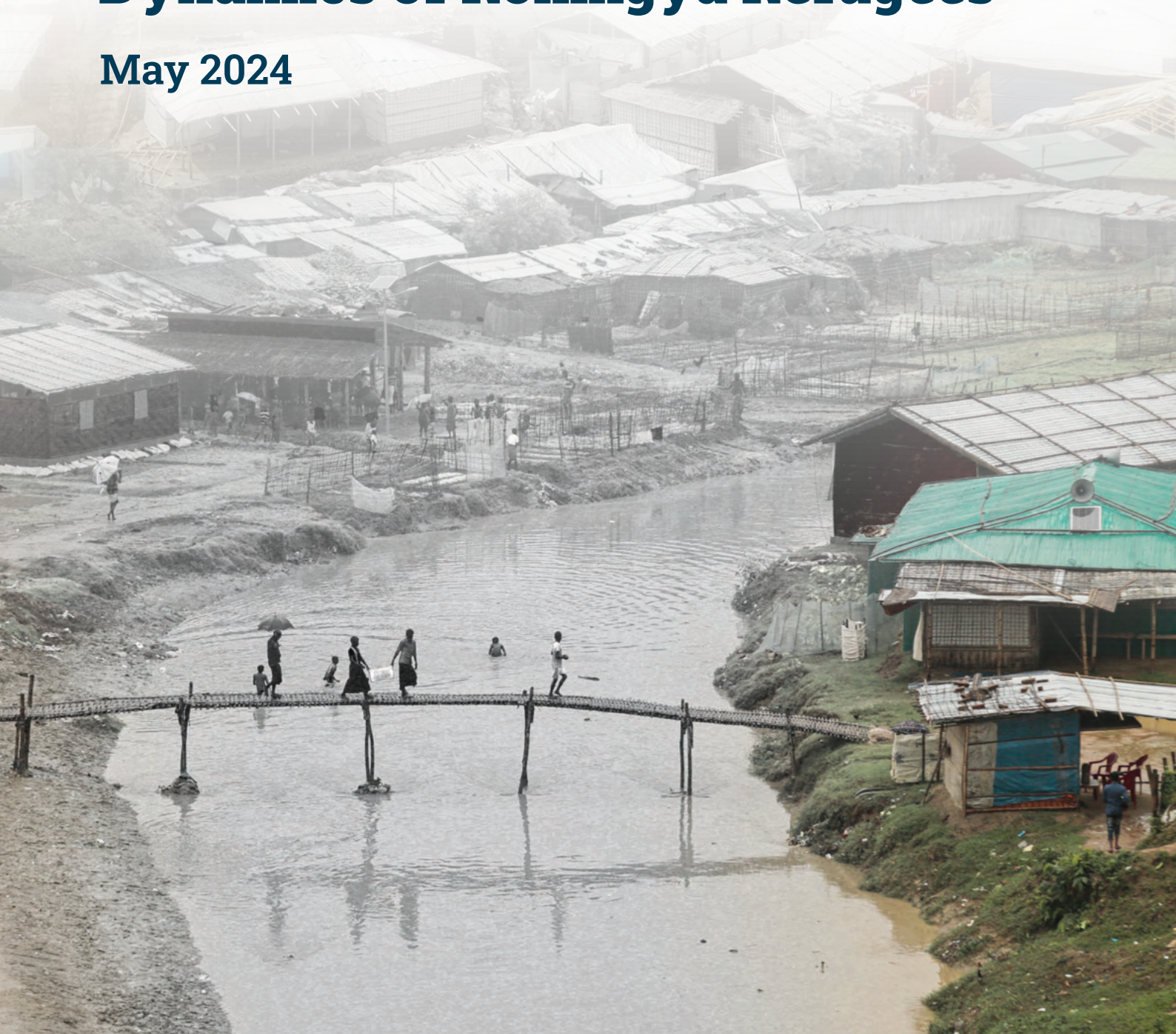


Research Report

Impact of Climate Change on the Migration and Displacement Dynamics of Rohingya Refugees

May 2024



Protecting Refugees in Asia

– towards a coordinated regional approach



Funded by
the European Union

Research Report
**Impact of Climate Change on the Migration and
Displacement Dynamics of Rohingya Refugees**

May 2024

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The “Protecting Refugees in Asia” (PRiA) project is a joint project of Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA), the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), HOST International Malaysia, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Indonesia, and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC). Through support from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the project addresses the protection risks and needs of refugees in Asia with a particular focus on India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. It combines evidence-based research with programmatic and advocacy expertise to allow project partners to explore and advocate for new ways to support refugees and the communities hosting them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the disaster-prone Asia-Pacific region, particularly in South Asia, the frequency and intensity of environmental hazards, exacerbated by climate change, pose significant risks. Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, with floods being the primary driver, recorded the highest number of disaster displacements in 2022. Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, hosting about a million Rohingya refugees, faces escalating climate-related threats, impacting camp life, safety during irregular movement, and prospects for return to Myanmar. While initial displacement from Myanmar was driven by persecution and conflicts, the dire conditions in refugee camps are increasingly influenced by climate factors, potentially contributing to onward movements to neighbouring countries like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

The emerging impact of climate change on the displacement and migration dynamics of Rohingya is increasingly relevant. Climate change introduces additional layers of challenges to the already dire situation of the Rohingya, particularly in Bangladesh and neighbouring countries, where they seek refuge. Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar are vulnerable to extreme weather events, with urgent climate mitigation and disaster preparedness measures needed to mitigate risks such as cyclones and landslides. Displaced populations like the Rohingya are particularly susceptible to secondary displacement due to settling in hazard-prone areas, exacerbating the risk of climate-related movement on a larger scale. The combination of food insecurity, violence, lack of livelihoods, and dwindling hope for durable solutions has led to a surge in irregular maritime movement of Rohingya across the region in recent months.

Though conflict remains the primary driver of Rohingya displacement, climate and environmental factors along with the deteriorating conditions in the camps significantly exacerbates migration risks, particularly during perilous sea journeys. In 2023, a staggering 13% of Rohingya perished or went missing during such journeys.¹ Within refugee camps, climate-induced hazards such as floods and cyclones pose additional threats, leading to internal displacement and necessitating proactive evacuation strategies. Moreover, involuntary immobility stemming from restricted mobility rights and lack of livelihood opportunities in Bangladesh compounds vulnerabilities, especially during climate-related disasters. The controversial relocation of Rohingya to Bhasan Char, touted as a safer alternative, faces scepticism due to inadequate infrastructure and emergency preparedness, raising concerns about their safety during disasters. Suspected coerced relocations and the possibility of climate-induced forced return further highlight the complexities of mobility decisions amid environmental risks. The secondary impact of environmental factors on migration decisions is evident in their function as a "threat multiplier," exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities concerning livelihoods and living conditions within the camps, thereby influencing migration decision.

Drawing from extensive data, including 4Mi survey data among 4,064 Rohingya in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand; household surveys with 200 individuals in Cox's Bazar; and interviews with 36 key stakeholders ranging from governments and international organisations to grassroots initiatives and research entities, this report sheds light on the intersection between climate change and (im)mobility for the Rohingya, aiming to provide evidence for better protection of Rohingya refugees in the context of climate change and conflict.

Section 1 of the report presents an overview of the research methodology and contextual background. Next, Section 2 examines the impacts of climate and environmental factors on the displacement and migration of Rohingya refugees, as well as the role they play in exacerbating the existing vulnerabilities. Section 3 and Section 4 focus on the global and regional mechanisms concerning climate change and refugee protection. The report concludes with approaches towards building climate-resilient and sustainable responses for refugee protection. The summary table below encapsulates key recommendations tailored for different stakeholders.

¹ In 2023, there were 569 recorded deaths or missing persons, out of over 4,500 total departures. See UNHCR (2024) [UNHCR: Urgent action needed to address dramatic rise in Rohingya deaths at sea](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Crosscutting Recommendations

- Upscale ‘nexus’ and ‘resilience’ approaches to reduce vulnerability of refugees and their host communities to the effects of climate change as a threat multiplier.
- Fully include refugees and other forcibly displaced populations into national and local climate change and disaster management frameworks and response mechanisms.
- More strongly integrate and address climate mobility in regional climate mechanisms and disaster frameworks.
- Make multi-year climate financing for adaptation and resilience programmes and initiatives accessible to displaced populations such as the Rohingya who are at risk of climate-induced loss and damage.
- Scale up and expand access to safe migration pathways through increased resettlement and complementary pathways as part of an expanded package of solutions for Rohingya refugees, including through supporting innovative linkages between portable green skills building and expanded access to labour complementary pathways.
- Integrate climate change considerations into assessments of future voluntary, safe, dignified and durable return options for refugees.

For Host Countries

- *For the Government of Bangladesh*
 - Ensure that non-nationals at risk of climate-related onward movement are included into the National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management and the National Action Plan (2022-2042) under the ‘prevention’ and ‘protection’ thematic areas.
 - Further scale up movement between Bhasan Char and mainland camps and ensure freedom of movement for Rohingya around the island, and within Cox’s Bazar.
 - Support efforts to improve safety, disaster preparedness and reduce exposure to environmental hazards for refugees in Bhasan Char.
 - Support the inclusion of Rohingya in disaster risk reduction strategies, early warning systems, and neighbourhood-based disaster preparedness initiatives.
 - Support efforts to build Rohingya-led disaster preparedness and response capacity and support the adequate provision of accessible cyclone shelters to Rohingya.
 - Allow for more climate-resilient and sustainable shelters to be built using more durable and weather resistant construction materials.
- *For the Governments of other Host Countries in the region*
 - Adopt ‘nexus’ and ‘resilience’ approaches to reduce the vulnerability of Rohingya and their host communities to the impacts of climate change and better prepare Rohingya to access complementary pathways and durable solutions in the future.
 - Ensure that refugees and other forcibly displaced populations are included into the design and implementation of national climate action policies and plans.

For Humanitarian Actors

- Work towards strengthening existing disaster preparedness initiatives by supporting proactive planning for emergency evacuations, provision for cyclone shelters in safe areas, and improved early warning systems.
- Continue to highlight the financial, protection, and environmental benefits of climate-resilient and sustainable shelter solutions.
- Support efforts to build the capacity of refugee-led organisations and provide them with material and technical support to act as first responders in a climate emergency.
- Build the capacity of Rohingya refugee-led organisations to access loss and damage financing.
- Empower and support Rohingya to take on leadership and decision-making responsibilities in

climate action and anticipatory action initiatives.

- Integrate considerations of the impact of environmental factors on protection risks in protection programming.
- Support and implement ‘nexus’ interventions that strengthen refugee and host community resilience and mitigate loss and damage from climate impacts.
- Integrate gender-responsive and intersectional considerations, and conflict-sensitive approaches into all ‘nexus’ and ‘resilience’ programming.
- Explore opportunities to support portable ‘green’ skills-building and livelihoods activities that engage Rohingya and their host communities in environmental conservation, climate mitigation activities, and infrastructure development activities.

For Donors

- Follow up and support the implementation of pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum to strengthen climate resilience and adaptation measures in Bangladesh, including investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, water and sanitation systems, and climate resilient-livelihoods.
- Support initiatives to strengthen local capacities, systems, and structures to increase refugees and their host communities’ ability to withstand climate shocks.
- Scale up multi-year financing for adaptation and strengthening resilience for displaced populations who are at risk of climate-related loss and damage, such as the Rohingya in Bangladesh.
- Ensure that already-displaced populations are considered as primary recipients of loss and damage funding through mechanisms such as the Santiago network and the ASEAN Climate Finance Strategy.
- Work to integrate climate financing with existing humanitarian, disaster risk reduction, and development funding streams.
- Support climate resilience and adaptation initiatives in Rakhine State in Myanmar to enhance preparedness for safe, dignified and durable returns.
- Increase funding for anticipatory action for displaced populations such as the Rohingya, with targeted investment in developing forecasting mechanisms, and risk and vulnerability mapping.
- Explore innovative ways of linking portable green skills-building with expanded access to ‘green’ education and labour complementary pathways.

For Regional Actors

- *For Governments in South and Southeast Asia*
 - Develop regional cooperation mechanisms to respond to climate-induced displacement, which should include free movement agreements and support for mobility as an effective form of climate adaptation.
 - Work towards establishing bilateral frameworks which would offer protection pathways, entry and stay, and temporary humanitarian protection to migrants in vulnerable situations and at particular risk of climate induced displacement.
- *For the Platform on Disaster Displacement*
 - Explore opportunities to engage and collaborate with the government of Bangladesh and ASEAN to develop regional and multilateral instruments to provide protection for those at risk of cross-border disaster displacement.
- *For the Asia Pacific Disaster Displacement Working Group*
 - Work towards developing more harmonised and protection-driven regional disaster frameworks, ensuring adequate attention is paid to climate-related cross-border disaster displacement in the context of both slow and rapid-onset climate events.
- *For the Second ASEAN Migration Outlook*
 - Provide recommendations for how ASEAN can integrate migrants at particular risk of climate impacts (such as Rohingya across the region) into climate mobility and labour mobility policies at the national and regional levels and outline a roadmap towards developing a comprehensive regional approach to climate mobility.

- *For the ASEAN Centre for Climate Change*
 - Conduct transboundary climate risk assessments in the area of human mobility and invest in developing regional forecasting mechanisms to support anticipatory action.
- *For the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management*
 - Ensure inclusion of all vulnerable groups including refugees as part of the implementation of the ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management.
- *For the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC) and the ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN)*
 - Facilitate mutual learning and collaboration around the issue of climate mobility through regular intergovernmental dialogues.



1 BACKGROUND

Decades of systemic persecution and discrimination against Rohingya have driven displacement of Rohingya within and from Myanmar. The military seizure of power post-February 2021 has further intensified conflict and violence in the country. Rohingya refugees have been forcibly displaced across the Asia region, with the majority in Bangladesh, which now hosts 975,350 Rohingya in camps in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char as of the end of January 2024.²

A lack of durable solutions – whether integration in host countries, resettlement to a third country, or return in safety and dignity, has left the Rohingya in limbo. While Bangladesh has a long history of hosting Rohingya refugees, the presence of close to one million Rohingya in Cox's Bazar continues to present challenges such as overcrowding, growing insecurity, escalating restrictions, and decreasing humanitarian aid.

Acute climate vulnerability in Bangladesh and Myanmar could act as a stress multiplier to existing challenges. Both countries were ranked among the top ten countries most affected by extreme weather events from 2000-2019.³ Cox's Bazar, which hosts the world's largest refugee camp, is one of the disaster-prone districts in the country frequently impacted by disasters such as tropical cyclones, floods, and landslides. Cyclone Mocha struck both countries in May 2023, and was the most recent extreme weather event affecting Rohingya, resulting in an estimated 3.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. The increasing frequency and intensity of these weather events due to climate change is likely to exacerbate and increase protection risks for Rohingya refugees. In 2023, there was a significant increase in irregular onward movement from Myanmar and Bangladesh, including 4,500 Rohingya embarking on dangerous maritime journeys, with more than 569 reported missing or dead.⁴

Environmental and climate risks could magnify underlying risk factors associated with insecurity and livelihood vulnerability that shape the migration and displacement dynamics of Rohingya refugees. This research aims to examine the complex ways in which climate change specifically affects (im)mobility for the Rohingya, and to what extent environmental factors interact with other social, economic, and political factors in driving (im)mobility, increasing protection risks, and impacting prospects for achieving durable solutions. It aims to provide a better understanding of the experiences of Rohingya refugees in the context of conflicts and disasters through an intersectional lens. The research outcomes will also support advocacy towards donors and host countries on integrating climate change into national and regional refugee protection policy and programming responses (and vice versa).

The research has the following objectives:

1. To explore the intersection of climate change and (im)mobility of Rohingya refugees;
2. To examine the experiences of Rohingya refugees in the context of climate change through an intersectional lens;
3. To provide credible evidence on how climate change impacts Rohingya refugees' protection risks, to support improved integration of linkages between climate change, (im)mobility, and protection risks policy and programming by humanitarian actors;
4. To identify strategic, actionable and practical recommendations to policymakers and other actors advocating for protection of Rohingya refugees in the context of climate change and conflict.

² UNHCR Operational Data Portal (accessed 20 February 2024) [Refugee Response in Bangladesh](#)

³ Germanwatch (2021) [Global Climate Risk Index 2021 - World](#)

⁴ UNHCR (23 January 2024) [UNHCR: Urgent action needed to address dramatic rise in Rohingya deaths at sea](#)

1.1 Research methodology

The research took place between December 2023 and February 2024. The terms of reference set out the following key research questions:

1. What role do climate change and environmental factors play in the (im)mobility dynamics of Rohingya refugees?
2. In what way do environmental factors intersect with other drivers of movements among Rohingya refugees?
3. How do underlying social, political, and economic factors shape the experiences of Rohingya refugees in the context of climate change and conflict?
4. To what extent do deteriorating environmental conditions affect protection risks and vulnerabilities among Rohingya refugees through an intersectional lens?
5. Do climate or environmental factors play a role in onward movements among Rohingya refugees? If so, in what way?
6. How do climate change and environmental factors impact prospects for achieving durable solutions for Rohingya refugees?
7. What are the gaps in national and regional refugee protection policy and programming in response to the nexus between climate change and migration and how could these gaps be addressed?

The research methodology comprised a mixed methods approach:

Table 1: Research Methodology

Desk Review	A desk review was conducted of publicly available literature, reporting and information on: climate change and (im)mobility of Rohingya; relevant national, regional and global legal and policy frameworks; key actors in the region working the climate/mobility nexus; and migration and displacement dynamics of Rohingya, including onward movement from Myanmar and Bangladesh to other parts of the region.
4Mi surveys	4Mi is Mixed Migration Centre’s flagship primary data collection system, an innovative approach that helps fill knowledge gaps, and inform policy and response regarding the nature of mixed migratory movements and the protection risks for refugees and migrants on the move. Under PRiA project between 2021-2024, MMC Asia Pacific had conducted survey interviews with 4,064 Rohingya in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Using purposive and snowball sampling methods, the sampling criteria include Rohingya adults (above 18 years old) who have arrived in the location of interview no longer than two years ago. While the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, the figures are not representative and cannot be used to make inferences about the total population.
Household Surveys	The field research team comprised the Field Research Lead, as well as a team of 10 Rohingya volunteer enumerators. Small grain packages were provided to all respondents in acknowledgment of their time and participation. 200 Household Surveys (HHS) of Rohingya were conducted across 20 camps in Cox’s Bazar, capturing both quantitative and qualitative data, incorporating an age, disability and gender-inclusive approach. Humanitarian research platform Kobo Toolbox was used to collect data on

Household Surveys	<p>electronic tablets. Female researchers conducted surveys with female respondents, and male researchers conducted surveys with male respondents. A majority (94%) of respondents arrived in Bangladesh from Myanmar from August to October 2017. 50% of respondents were women, and 37% of respondents were from female-headed households. 17% of respondents identified that there was at least one person within their household with a disability.</p> <p>Volunteers worked in pairs and used random sampling to choose sub-blocks and households within each of the surveyed camps - 1 East, 1 West, 3, 4, 4 extension, 5, 6, 7, 8 East, 8 West, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20 and 20 extension. Based on the field research team's anecdotal knowledge, the camps were selected as they have all experienced environmental impacts that may be linked to climate change. For example, camps 8 West and 14 are hilly, making soil erosion and landslides common occurrences. Camps 3, 5 and 6 have previously experienced flooding and the impacts of strong winds. Residents in camps 8 and 10 have been facing challenges in accessing clean water.</p> <p>Closed-question quantitative questions allowed for a degree of comparison across households, while open questions allowed for qualitative information to be gathered regarding lived experiences of Rohingya, perceptions, mobility aspirations and intentions.</p>
Key Informant Interviews	<p>Questionnaire templates were used to guide 36 confidential semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) to seek a range of expert views on the research questions. Key informants were identified based on existing networks and literature on the topic, as well as via snowball sampling.</p> <p>Key informants included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of Rohingya-led grassroots organisations in Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char), India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, including a focus on youth and women-led organisations where possible; • Stakeholders at the global, regional (Asia Pacific), subregional (South and Southeast Asia), and national (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand) levels engaged in humanitarian policy and programming, disaster preparedness and response, climate change, refugee protection, migration and displacement, including academia, research institutes, civil society, community-based organisations, INGOs, United Nations bodies, and intergovernmental bodies.
Data Analysis and Validation	<p>Household survey data was analysed utilising Kobo Toolbox to undertake intersectional quantitative and qualitative analysis. The key informant interview data was analysed using a deductive coding approach to identify themes and patterns, and to triangulate key findings.</p>

1.2 Research assumptions and limitations

It was assumed that household survey respondents may have a **limited understanding of climate change and its impacts** and how these may link to protection risks in the camps. Based on lived experience in the camps, the Field Research Lead anticipated that some Rohingya participants would hold some scepticism about the phenomenon of climate change. To respond to this, survey enumerators were trained on the technical concepts explored in the survey, and non-technical explanations of climate change and its possible impacts were prepared to assist in framing discussions with survey respondents.

Based on established literature on climate change, environmental phenomena that may be linked to anthropogenic climate change in Bangladesh and the wider Asia region include: extreme hydro-climatic weather (e.g. rain, storms, cyclones); flooding; fires (from natural causes, e.g. lightning, heat); extreme warm weather; extreme cold weather; drought; desertification; sea level rise; landslides; and loss of biodiversity.⁵ Research questions were framed broadly to talk about these ‘environmental impacts’ that may be linked to climate change, recognising (as supported by the literature) that attributing direct links between environmental events and climate change can be difficult. Similarly, it can be difficult to attribute direct **causation** between climate-related environmental impacts and (im)mobility. Accordingly, this report does not seek to attribute individual migration decisions to specific environmental events. Rather, it examines migration trends and the subjective perceptions of Rohingya refugees of environmental impacts they face - which may be linked to climate change - on their lives, and their current and future migration decisions.

It was also assumed that most Rohingya respondents would have **more pressing concerns** than environmental issues, such as a lack of durable solutions, food security and increasing violence in the camps. It was anticipated therefore that it may be difficult to draw concrete conclusions about how climate change is contributing to onward movement of Rohingya refugees, as current migration is likely to be primarily driven by other factors. Survey questions were framed to attempt to draw links between environmental factors and other aspects of life, such as security, shelter, food and livelihoods, to examine how climate might be intersecting with other drivers of migration, for example, as a “threat multiplier”.

One key limitation was the **short timeframe** for the research, and the time of year of the project. The research period coincided with end-of-year annual leave periods for many key informants, and **significant global events in the refugee and climate sectors** - the COP28 Climate Change Conference in the United Arab Emirates (30 November - 12 December 2023), and the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva (13-15 December 2023) - which impacted the availability of interviewees.

Another limitation was the security situation in the camps. The presence of armed groups and criminal elements in the camps posed possible security risks for the field research team and survey respondents. Heightened levels of monitoring and restrictions on activities within the camps in the lead up to the Bangladeshi general election on 7 January 2024 also needed to be carefully navigated. To mitigate these concerns, security considerations were factored into the research methodology, and a security protocol was developed to ensure that the safety and security of Rohingya participants and volunteers was considered in all decision-making regarding data collection, and closely monitored throughout the data collection period. Further, household surveys were completed by 31 December 2023, to ensure finalisation of the field research in advance of the general election.

1.3 Research ethics

The ethical approach of the research is in line with the MMC’s goal of producing high quality principled and participatory research, in order to contribute to Objective 1 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) on data, by providing in-depth data on migration as a basis for evidence-based policy making.

⁵ IPCC (2022) [IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#), Chapter 10: Asia; Asian Development Bank (2012) [Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific](#), p23

An age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach was taken to research participant sampling and selection of Rohingya volunteers, to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and experiences were included. Women were interviewed by female enumerators, in line with gender and cultural considerations.

Researchers were trained to ensure an overarching principle of ‘do no harm’ was applied, as well as a human-rights based and trauma-informed approach. Informed consent was sought from respondents prior to their involvement in the research, participation was voluntary, and respondents had the right to decline to answer or to withdraw from the research at any time. Data was stored securely and research products were de-identified to ensure confidentiality. Everyone involved in data collection activities was required to adhere to the DRC Code of Conduct.

1.4 Conceptualising climate change (im)mobility

The issue of climate migration and displacement has gradually gained prominence in international environmental and climate change frameworks, including in: Paragraph 14(f) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Cancun Adaptation Framework, adopted in 2010;⁶ the 2015 Paris Agreement which ‘represented an unprecedented breakthrough in integrating human mobility concerns and the rights of migrants in an international universal climate treaty’;⁷ and the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM) Task Force on Displacement, created in 2015.⁸ Furthermore, in March 2022, human mobility and disaster displacement were highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which stated with “high confidence” that climate and weather extremes are increasingly driving displacement in all regions.⁹

Aligned closely with both international environmental and human rights frameworks is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, underpinned by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of climate-related migration and displacement, particularly in relation to slow onset events and environmental degradation, the SDG framework provides a holistic lens through which to take proactive action (including development and adaptation assistance), to ensure social, economic and environmental conditions that allow people to remain *in situ*, or where appropriate or necessary, to migrate. Responsible migration planning and management can also be viewed through an SDG lens (along with the GCM). UNHCR has also recognised the importance of the SDGs, stating in relation to climate mobility, “...coordinated responses are needed to ensure that the human rights of all are respected regardless of status and that – in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals – no-one is left behind.”¹⁰

The intricate nature of climate mobility is reflected in the array of language and terminology used. Currently, there are no established norms of language across institutions, nor universally accepted definitions, and there is a lack of an international legal framework defining or governing mobility related to climate change. This research draws upon the new conceptual framework proposed by the MMC (see Figure 1), aimed at capturing the complexity of the roles of environmental and climate-related factors in shaping mobility outcomes. The term “climate mobility” encompasses any form of human mobility (forced or voluntary) caused by environmental change, including displacement, evacuation, planned relocation or managed retreat and migration. Climate immobility must also be recognised, because often, people who are most vulnerable to climate-related events have the least capacity to move and are thus involuntary immobile - for example, due to age, health, disability, or resources.¹¹ At the same time, voluntary immobility may also signify resilience, indicating that a population is effectively adapting to a changing environment and choosing to remain stationary.

⁶ Bilak, A. and Kälin, W. (2022) [Climate crisis and displacement – from commitment to action](#), Forced Migration Review 69

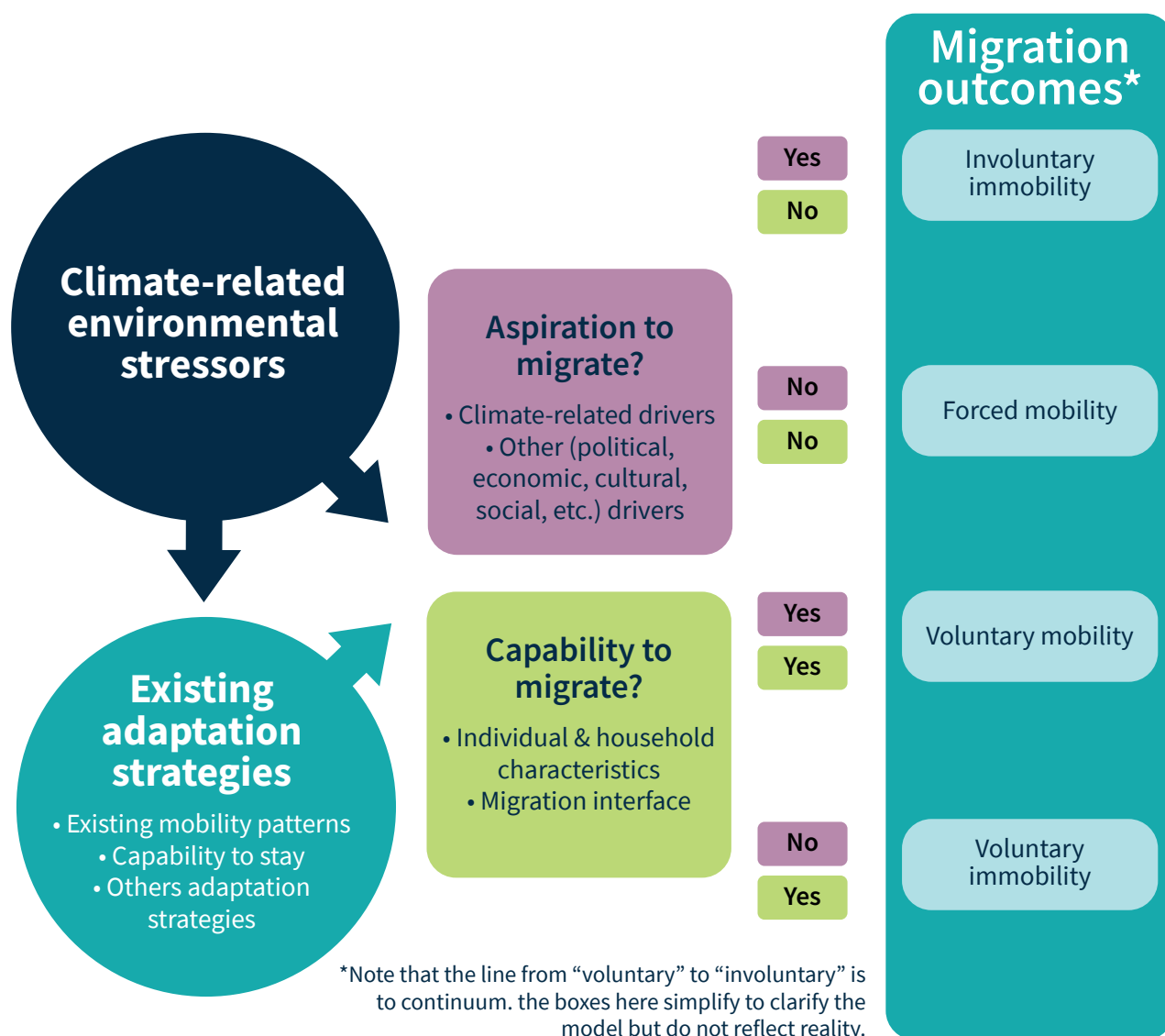
⁷ International Organization for Migration (2018) [Analysis Report: Mapping Human Mobility \(Migration, Displacement and Planned Relocation\) and Climate Change in International Processes, Policies and Legal Frameworks](#), 37

⁸ UNFCCC (2013) [Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts](#)

⁹ Platform on Disaster Displacement (2022) [Key Messages for the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference – COP27](#); and IPCC (2023) [Sixth Assessment Report](#)

¹⁰ Garlick, M. and Isabelle M. (2022) [Human mobility, rights and international protection: responding to the climate crisis](#), Forced Migration Review 69

¹¹ Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law (2023) [Kaldor Centre Principles on Climate Mobility](#)

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for climate mobility¹²

Identifying climate change as the direct cause of an environmental event can be challenging, and similarly there are complexities in establishing direct causation between climate impacts and migration (particularly in the case of slow-onset disasters).¹³ However, there is a growing acknowledgement that climate change plays a role in driving forced displacement and voluntary migration – primarily within borders, but also across international borders (usually within the same region).¹⁴ Climate change is often regarded as a “threat multiplier,” exacerbating existing inequalities and risks - for example, through destroying shelter or increasing food insecurity, which in turn forcibly displaces individuals.¹⁵ Conversely, migration can serve as an effective form of climate adaptation, allowing for people to access livelihood and opportunities elsewhere, while supporting resilience efforts for those who remain through remittances and resource-sharing.¹⁶ This conceptual framework emphasises adaptation in place for those who wish to remain, and where necessary, facilitate “migration with dignity” allowing people access to safe options such as labour mobility, education, and humanitarian pathways.

¹² The conceptual framework illustrates how climate-related environmental stressors affect mobility outcomes, both directly and indirectly impacting the aspiration and the capability to migrate. For a detailed explanation, see MMC’s report [Climate-related events and environmental stressors’ roles in driving migration in West and North Africa](#) for analysis.

¹³ Mixed Migration Centre (2022) [Climate change, environmental stressors, and mixed migration](#)

¹⁴ UNHCR (2020) [Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters](#); UNHCR (2023) [Climate change and displacement: the myths and the facts](#)

¹⁵ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2022) [Climate change is a threat multiplier for women and girls: UN expert](#); World Health Organisation (2023) [Climate Change: Key facts](#); Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, [Climate Mobility Hub](#)

¹⁶ Climate Outreach (2023) [Resilience on the move: migration’s powerful role in creating climate resilience](#)

Despite increasing recognition of the connection between climate change and displacement, there remains a lack of consensus regarding the standard definition of individuals who are displaced by climate-related factors. The concept of “climate or environmental refugee” is not explicitly covered under **international refugee law**.¹⁷ However, some people fleeing in the context of adverse climate change effects may have valid refugee claims under the 1951 Refugee Convention,¹⁸ if they have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for one or more grounds under that Convention, from which the authorities of the country of origin are unable or unwilling to provide protection. UNHCR guidance provides that, “the assessment of claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters should not focus narrowly on the climate change event or disaster as solely or primarily natural hazards. Such a narrow focus might fail to recognise the social and political characteristics of the effects of climate change or the impacts of disasters or their interaction with other drivers of displacement.”¹⁹ Grounds for international refugee protection may arise where people belonging to particular groups who are already marginalised or vulnerable, may suffer disproportionate impacts of climate change, may be denied access to resources or assistance, or may be “excluded from disaster risk reduction strategies before or after a climate-induced disaster.”²⁰

Under **international human rights law** (IHRL), in the landmark case of *Teitiota v New Zealand*, the UN Human Rights Committee found that in principle, it would be unlawful for states to return people to places where the impacts of climate change expose them to life-threatening risks, or the risk of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.²¹ However, the threshold for non-refoulement under IHRL is “prohibitively high,”²² and while it remains an important protection of last resort, it does not represent a sound basis for proactive and rights-protecting policy approaches to climate-induced migration and displacement. IHRL may arise in several other ways in relation to climate-related migration and displacement, including procedural rights for people who are displaced²³ and substantive rights such as the right to life and the right to a healthy environment.²⁴

Other relevant international instruments and fora, discussed later in this report, include: UNHCR’s 2014 Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements;²⁵ the non-binding 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;²⁶ the 2015 Nansen Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change (the Protection Agenda);²⁷ the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD);²⁸ the Global Compact for Migration (GCM);²⁹ and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).³⁰ International Disaster Law, International Environmental Law (including the international climate change framework) and Sustainable Development are also relevant global frameworks to consider in relation to the climate-mobility nexus.

The Asia and the Pacific region is the most disaster-prone region in the world.³¹ In 2022, the South Asia subregion recorded the highest number of disaster displacements in the world, driven largely by record-breaking flooding in Pakistan. Floods triggered 90% of the subregion’s disaster displacement, with

¹⁷ Scott, M. (2019) *Climate Refugees and the 1951 Convention in Satvinder Singh Juss* (ed), Research Handbook on International Refugee Law, Edward Elgar, 2019, 343, 343, 347; McAdam, J. (2020) *Current Developments - Protecting People Displaced by the Impacts Of Climate Change: The UN Human Rights Committee and the Principle of Non-Refoulement* October 1, 2020, American Journal of International Law, 114(4), p. 708-725, UNSW Law Research Paper No. 21-23; McAdam, J. (2011) *Swimming against the Tide: Why a Climate Change Displacement Treaty is Not the Answer* International Journal of Refugee Law Vol. 23 No. 1 pp. 2–27

¹⁸ Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (28 July 1951), 189 UNTS 137

¹⁹ UNHCR (2020) [Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters](#) [5]

²⁰ UNHCR (2023) [Climate change impacts and cross-border displacement: International refugee law and UNHCR’s mandate](#) [1.1.1.c.]

²¹ Human Rights Committee (24 October 2019) *Ioane Teitiota v. New Zealand*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/127/D/2728/2016; Also see: McAdam, J. (2020) ‘[Current Developments - Protecting People Displaced by the Impacts Of Climate Change: The UN Human Rights Committee and the Principle of Non-Refoulement](#)’ American Journal of International Law 114 (4), p. 708-725

²² Betts, A. (2013) *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 181

²³ Zetter, R. (2008) [Legal and Normative Frameworks](#), Forced Migration Review 31, October 2008; Zetter outlines a rights-based approach to protection which ‘demands that affected populations are fully involved in developing response strategies, and that advocacy tools and processes are enhanced to promote their rights’; also see: See also Scott et al (2022) [FIRE: A Framework for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality into Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change adaptation](#)

²⁴ United Nations General Assembly (2022) [Resolution on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment](#), adopted 28 July 2022, A/RES/76/300; United Nations Human Rights Council (2021) [Resolution recognizing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment](#), adopted 8 October 2021, Resolution 48/13; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk (2023) [Keynote Address, “Climate protection as a human right”](#) Vienna Diplomatic Academy

²⁵ UNHCR (2014) [Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements](#)

²⁶ UN Commission on Human Rights (1998) Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis M. Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission resolution 1997/39, [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2

²⁷ [Nansen Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change](#) (2015)

²⁸ [Platform on Disaster Displacement](#)

²⁹ UN General Assembly (2018) [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#)

³⁰ UN General Assembly (2018) [Global Compact on Refugees](#)

³¹ United Nations ESCAP, (2023) [Seizing the Moment: Targeting Transformative Disaster Risk Resilience, Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2023](#)

Pakistan, India and Bangladesh being most impacted. Climate change is making environmental hazards more frequent and intense, and weather patterns more unpredictable.³² Bangladesh is one of the most climate insecure countries in the world, and Cox's Bazar is one of the most climate vulnerable regions within the country.³³ Over one million Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar face cascading and compounding risks. Climate and environmental hazards are impacting life in the camps, the safety of onward irregular movement, and the viability of return to Myanmar. While the primary driver of initial displacement from Myanmar was targeted violence and persecution, the dire conditions Rohingya face in refugee camps are increasingly impacted by climate, which may be compounding drivers of onward movement to India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Climate experts have expressed concern that Rohingya camps in Bangladesh are located in an extreme-weather hot zone,³⁴ and that without urgent climate mitigation action and investment in disaster preparedness, they are under severe threat from environmental hazards such as cyclones and landslides.³⁵ Groups such as the Rohingya who have been displaced by conflict are more likely to be secondarily displaced by disasters. This is because refugees often settle in hazard-prone areas, with temporary shelters, and usually have limited resources and local networks.³⁶ There is an increasing risk that climate events in Cox's Bazar may contribute to onward movement of Rohingya at scale. Food insecurity, violence, a lack of livelihoods and education in the camps, and diminishing hope for durable solutions, have caused a dramatic increase in irregular maritime movement of Rohingya across the region in recent months. Over 4,680 Rohingya, increasingly women and children, have embarked on dangerous sea journeys since January 2023. An estimated 569 have been reported dead or missing.³⁷ It is anticipated that an escalation of environmental hazards in Cox's Bazar would only serve to compound existing drivers of movement.

Rather than "climate change migrants" or "climate change displacement," the Asia Pacific Academic Network on Disaster Displacement (APANDD) adopts the term "human mobility in the context of disasters and climate change,"³⁸ which recognises that political, social, economic and historical contextual factors must be taken into account when examining when and why certain people choose or are forced to move. Although economic and social factors are often viewed as the primary drivers of migration it is important to not neglect "underlying structural forces" which may be important yet not perceived by individuals.³⁹ This research therefore centres on the subjective perceptions of Rohingya of the environmental impacts that they are facing, and aims to assess how these impacts are interacting with other aspects of their lives, including social, economic and political factors, and how these intersections may be influencing mobility.

³² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2023) [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023](#), pp59 - 67

³³ UNDP (2018-2026) [Strengthening Disaster Risk Management and Community Resilience in Cox's Bazar](#)

³⁴ Shaoun, S. (5 June 2023) [Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's 'hot zone for climate threats'](#), Al Jazeera

³⁵ For example, in May 2023, Cyclone Mocha, one of the strongest cyclones to ever hit the region, hit Myanmar and Bangladesh. In October 2023, Cyclone Hamoon caused the evacuation of nearly 275,000 people in the Cox's Bazar region. See: Bauchner, S. (18 May 2023) [Cyclone Mocha Devastates Myanmar's Rohingya](#), Human Rights Watch; and International Rescue Committee (27 October 2023) [Bangladesh: Cyclone Hamoon ravages Cox's Bazar as a severe cyclonic storm, affecting over 450,000 lives and damaging 13 IRC learning centres](#)

³⁶ Calabria, E. et al (2022) [Anticipatory Action in Refugee and IDP Camps: Challenges, Opportunities, and Considerations](#), Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

³⁷ UNHCR (23 January 2024) [Briefing note: Urgent action needed to address dramatic rise in Rohingya deaths at sea](#); UNHCR (accessed on 9 February 2024) [Operational Data Portal, Myanmar Situation, Rohingya Refugee Maritime Movements](#)

³⁸ Asia Pacific Academic Network on Disaster Displacement (APANDD) (2022) [Submission in response to Call for inputs by Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protect of human rights in the context of climate change: Addressing the human rights implications of climate change displacement including legal protection of people displaced across international borders](#)

³⁹ This point was raised in the landmark 2011 Foresight Report, which recognises five key interdependent drivers of migration: economic, social, political, demographic and environmental. The Foresight Report found that 'economic and social factors generally far outweigh other factors', however, 'as this evidence is based on surveys, this reflects individuals' perceptions of what is important... it may still mean that there are underlying structural forces which are important yet not perceived by individuals.' See: The Government Office for Science, London (2011) [Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change, Final Project Report](#) p46

1.5 National frameworks

None of the focus countries - Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand - are signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. There has been some limited engagement by domestic courts on issues of deportation and refoulement,⁴⁰ however, in practice, vulnerable refugees and migrants are often forcibly returned to their countries of origin, with little consideration for their human rights.⁴¹ State-level responses are ad hoc and reactive, resulting in inconsistent protection across the region. Each country falls under the purview of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (UNHCR RBAP), and each has a Country Office (UNHCR CO) mandated to facilitate protection and pursue 'durable solutions' for refugees. Hosting states remain focused on third country solutions or voluntary return, whether or not viable.⁴² In practice, UNHCR's ability to provide protection varies, depending on the political will of the host country. UNHCR is barred in some countries from registering and assisting certain politically sensitive groups, including Rohingya.

Despite an absence of comprehensive regional and national protection frameworks within South and Southeast Asia, there are existing examples of State policy that could potentially offer protective pathways, entry and stay, and temporary regular status, to migrants in vulnerable situations, such as Rohingya facing climate-related secondary displacement.⁴³ UNHCR has highlighted temporary humanitarian protection and stay as a practical tool to protect people displaced across borders in the case of large-scale influx or similar humanitarian crises, where individual status determination may not be possible, such as in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. UNHCR advises that such arrangements should be 'without prejudice to the grant of refugee status and other forms of international protection' and also need to be 'connected to longer-term strategies to ensure that the rights of temporarily protected people will be respected,' and to ensure that they will have access to longer-term solutions where needed.⁴⁴ In practice, discretionary powers to permit humanitarian entry and stay have been used inconsistently, on the basis of preferencing certain groups based on nationality, religion and/or geopolitical dynamics between host and origin state.

While not the subject of this report, a common finding across all focus countries - with the possible exception of Thailand⁴⁵ - was strong evidence of growing xenophobia and anti-Rohingya sentiment in both public perceptions and government responses. In relation to the regional protection space for Rohingya, this trend was highlighted by several key informants as a pressing and priority concern.⁴⁶ Anti-refugee sentiment was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been stoked by coordinated online campaigns spreading hate speech and disinformation in India, Indonesia and Malaysia, which attempt to paint Rohingya as a 'threat to national security' and as scapegoats for wider social issues. While not directly related to climate mobility and displacement in the region, it is clear that countering negative narratives about cross-border migration will be crucial to coherent and rights-respecting regional and national responses to primary displacement and onward movement of Rohingya, which may in the future include increasing climate-related movement.

All countries have implemented national disaster and climate change policies, however mobility considerations and durable solutions for climate displacement are generally not well-integrated, if at all.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ See, for example, Reuters (13 December 2022) [Malaysia court lifts stay on deportation of 114 Myanmar nationals](#)

⁴¹ See, for example: Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (2022) [APRRN Calls on the Royal Thai Government to Comply with International Law and Cease its Deportation of Refugees](#); International Detention Coalition (2021) [Malaysia Defies Court Order, Putting Lives in Imminent Danger](#)

⁴² International Refugee Assistance Project (2022) [Spotlight on Local and Refugee-Led Efforts to Address Key Protection Needs Lead Consultant and Writer for South and Southeast Asia](#)

⁴³ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)

⁴⁴ UNHCR (2023) [Climate change impacts and cross-border displacement: International refugee law and UNHCR's mandate](#) [1-3]

⁴⁵ Past research has found the Thai public to be '...among the least accepting of migrants and refugees in the world. Very often, refugees are grouped together with migrant workers and branded as 'threats,' 'carriers of diseases' or an economic 'burden.' However, there are some signs of a shifting official approach. Leveraging Thailand's role as a 'champion country' for the implementation of GCM, IOM is working with civil society, academia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a campaign to improve public perceptions of migrants and refugees. See: International Detention Coalition (2023) [The Study of Thai Public Perception towards Migrants and Refugees](#); and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand (2024) [From Dialogue to Action: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IOM Join Forces to Shape Public Perceptions towards Migrants](#)

⁴⁶ Recognising this trend, 'narrative change' is a priority for the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) under its new strategic plan.

⁴⁷ While not a focus of this report, it is noted that Pakistan's 2023 National Adaptation Plan contains several references to displacement and refugees in the context of climate change, as well as the climate-conflict-migration nexus. See: Government of Pakistan (2023) [National Adaptation Plan](#)

1.5.1 Bangladesh

Refugees: Bangladesh hosts 942,776 Rohingya refugees in camps in Cox’s Bazar, and 32,574 on Bhasan Char. There is no refugee law framework in Bangladesh, however there is a constitutional obligation to adhere to the principle of non-refoulement.⁴⁸ UNHCR conducts refugee status determination for urban asylum seekers in Dhaka. The Government of Bangladesh ended its UNHCR-facilitated third country resettlement programme in 2010 ‘out of fear [the country] would become a hub for refugees seeking to move to the West.’⁴⁹ The government’s official position on durable solutions for Rohingya is that voluntary repatriation to Myanmar is the preferred option. UNHCR’s 2024 Strategy sets out a plan to include third country resettlement and complementary pathways in a ‘comprehensive approach to solutions’ by end-2025.⁵⁰

Climate Change & Disasters: Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts including extreme heat, saline intrusion, flooding, extreme rainfall, cyclones and storm surges.⁵¹ While Bangladesh has positioned itself as a global climate leader⁵² with robust domestic frameworks related to adaptation, disaster risk reduction (DRR), preparedness and response, key policy documents like the National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh (2023-2050) (NAPA),⁵³ and the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP)⁵⁴ do not explicitly address the needs of Rohingya and other non-nationals. NAPA acknowledges displacement, internal migration, and planned relocation as potential climate change impacts, however, the plan generally focuses on ‘mitigating’ or ‘halting’ migration.⁵⁵

The Bangladesh National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management (the strategy),⁵⁶ launched in 2021, has been lauded as firmly grounded in international human rights law and in alignment with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The strategy explicitly references normative standards in international refugee law, as well as the GCM, the GCR and the Platform on Disaster Displacement. While the strategy primarily addresses internal displacement, excluding cross-border displacement, it acknowledges both slow and rapid-onset climate events, and both temporary and permanent displacement. The strategy recognises human rights obligations towards ‘citizens and other persons under its jurisdiction,’ however it may currently offer limited practical utility for Rohingya refugees, who lack freedom of movement within Bangladesh.⁵⁷ Despite this, the strategy’s provisions for prevention, resilient livelihoods, international cooperation, and gender-sensitive disaster shelters, provide rights-based and protection-oriented framework that could potentially be applied, either directly, or by analogy to Rohingya at risk of secondary disaster-driven displacement within Bangladesh.

Humanitarian entry and stay: Article 10 of the Foreigners Act (1946) grants authority to exempt any individual migrant or group of migrants from the requirements of the Act, which potentially offers a pathway for migrants in vulnerable situations.⁵⁸



⁴⁸ Neef et al (2023) [The Conflict, Climate Change, and Displacement Nexus Revisited: The Protracted Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh](#), Journal of Peacebuilding & Development; Islam et al (2021) [The Peril and Potential of Ambiguity: How National Laws and Policies Can Strengthen and Protect the Rights of Rohingya Refugees](#), Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law 22 8-27

⁴⁹ Paul, R. & Das, K. (2020) [As Other Doors Close, Some Rohingya Cling to Hope of Resettlement](#) Reuters

⁵⁰ UNHCR (accessed 21 February 2024) [Global Focus: Bangladesh](#)

⁵¹ The World Bank Group (2021) [Climate Risk Country Profile: Bangladesh](#)

⁵² International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) (2023) [Policy Brief: Strengthening Loss and Damage Narrative – Building cohesive voices with policymakers and civil society in Bangladesh](#); UNDP (2023) [Bangladesh wins Global Center on Adaptation Award for Local Climate Leadership at COP28](#); International Monetary Fund (2023) [Press release no. 23/420. Bangladesh and its Partners are Launching the Bangladesh Climate and Development Platform to Leverage Adaptation and Mitigation Investments](#)

⁵³ Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (2022) [National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh \(2030-2050\)](#)

⁵⁴ Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (2021) [Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan](#)

⁵⁵ Danish Refugee Council and Stockholm Environment Institute (2022) [Exploring the Environment-Conflict-Migration Nexus in Asia, Asia Climate Framework – Research Report p2](#)

⁵⁶ Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (2021) [Ministry of Disaster Management, National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management](#); Also see: Siddiqui et al (2023) [Policy Architecture to Address Disaster and Climate Change Induced Displacement in Bangladesh](#), Researching Internal Displacement

⁵⁷ Youth Congress Rohingya (2023) [This persecution is the worst there is: Restrictions on Rohingya freedom of movement in Bangladesh](#)

⁵⁸ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)

1.5.2 India

Refugees: India hosts 212,617 refugees and asylum-seekers as of December 2023, primarily historic displaced populations from Sri Lanka and Tibet, as well as more recent arrivals from Myanmar and Afghanistan. This figure is estimated to include 22,110 Rohingya.⁵⁹

Refugees are not recognised under Indian law. However, in the past India has enabled the entry and stay of large, displaced populations from neighbouring countries including Tibet and Sri Lanka. A dual system is applied in India where refugees from neighbouring countries are able to register under Ministry of Home Affairs, while UNHCR conducts refugee status determination for asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Myanmar (including Rohingya) and non-neighbouring countries.⁶⁰ There has been a deterioration of the protection space for refugees under the current administration, and civil society reports difficulties in working directly with displaced populations. The 2019 Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) discriminates on the basis of religion, and fast tracks applications for non-Muslim irregular migrants from neighbouring countries. This law has been criticised for '[disenfranchising] the Rohingya population from protection and [fuelling] hostility from the local population towards Muslim refugees.'⁶¹

Climate Change & Disasters: India records some of the highest numbers of internal disaster displacements in the world.⁶² India is predicted to experience intensification of climate extremes, including heat, flooding, drought, and heavy rainfall.⁶³ India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (2008) includes a focus on protecting the poor through an inclusive and sustainable development strategy, sensitive to climate change. It makes brief mention of migration and evacuations but has been criticised for a lack of clear strategies and specificity.

The revised National Disaster Management Plan (2019) (NDMP) refers to the Sendai Framework including in relation to empowerment of local authorities to coordinate with migrants in disaster risk management at the local level. It also contains chapters on social inclusion and 'building back better.' The foreword by Prime Minister Modi refers to widening the reach of disaster risk reduction planning to 'cover every citizen.' Migrants, refugees and non-nationals are not explicitly included.

The NDMP contemplates human displacement in the context of tsunamis and earthquakes. It contains guidance on evacuations, and a section on relocation which highlights the need to 'avoid secondary displacement as far as possible' and ensuring relocation is socially inclusive, gender sensitive, and consent based.⁶⁴

Humanitarian entry and stay: Nationals of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are entitled to apply for a Long-Term Visa (LTV) which permits humanitarian leave to stay in India temporarily in certain cases, including cases of 'extreme compassion.' Nepalis have the right to live and work in India under the free movement policy established by the bilateral and reciprocal 1950 Peace and Friendship Treaty. The e-Emergency X-Misc Visa was introduced in August 2021, in response to the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. The visa facilitates and fast tracks urgent applications by any foreign nationals who need to enter India urgently for emergency or compassionate reasons.⁶⁵



⁵⁹ Paliath, S. (2024) [The Toll Of Refugee Life On Rohingya Mental Health](#)

⁶⁰ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)

⁶¹ International Refugee Assistance Project (2022) [Spotlight on Local and Refugee-Led Efforts to Address Key Protection Needs](#)

⁶² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [Country Profile: India](#)

⁶³ The World Bank Group (2021) [Climate Risk Country Profile: India](#)

⁶⁴ Government of India (2019) [National Disaster Management Plan](#)

⁶⁵ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)

1.5.3 Indonesia

Refugees: Indonesia hosts approximately 12,295 refugees, primarily from Afghanistan and Myanmar. In 2023, Indonesia saw an upsurge in Rohingya boat arrivals, with 2,288 individuals disembarking in the country.⁶⁶ While local fishing communities have historically been welcoming of Rohingya boat arrivals, public sentiment has shifted in recent months. Rohingya are facing hostility and some boats have been pushed back to sea.⁶⁷

Indonesia's Constitution guarantees 'the right to obtain political asylum from another country,' however, this provision has not translated into a comprehensive national refugee protection framework. The immigration law allows immigration officials to deny access to the country for anyone who lacks a valid travel document or visa, without a requirement to assess any protection, leaving open the possibility of refoulement. In the wake of the 2015 Andaman Sea crisis, the 2016 Presidential Decree Concerning the Handling of Foreign Refugees was passed, which sets out processes for refugee reception, shelter, and safeguarding.

Climate Change & Disasters: Indonesia is highly exposed to climate risks including sea level rise, flooding and extreme heat.⁶⁸ In 2007, Indonesia adopted Law Number 24 Concerning Disaster Management, which considers people displaced by disasters,⁶⁹ and promotes durable solutions for IDPs and efforts to reduce social conflict and tension in disaster-affected communities.⁷⁰ Indonesia introduced BNPB Reg. 3/2018 on the Handling of Displaced Persons in Disaster Emergency, which addresses the situation of displaced persons during displacement, however, is not grounded in international standards such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.⁷¹ Indonesia has prioritised planned relocation under its Climate Resilience Development Policy 2020-2045 for protecting coastal communities.⁷² It is unclear whether these policies are designed to include non-citizens such as Rohingya.

Humanitarian entry and stay: Law No. 6 on Immigration provides ministerial discretion for the grant of temporary or permanent stay of migrants in Indonesia, allowing stay of up to five years or indefinitely if it is not cancelled.⁷³



⁶⁶ UNHCR (2024) [Document - UNHCR Indonesia - Rohingya Boat Arrivals Emergency Update](#)

⁶⁷ Samosir, H. & Ajengrastri, A. (2023) [Indonesia: Babies die on boats as locals chase Rohingya refugees](#) BBC

⁶⁸ The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank (2021) [Climate Risk Profile: Indonesia](#)

⁶⁹ Government of Indonesia, National Authorities (2008) [Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 of 2007 Concerning Disaster Management](#)

⁷⁰ IDMC and ADB (2023) [Disaster Displacement: Indonesia Country Briefing](#)

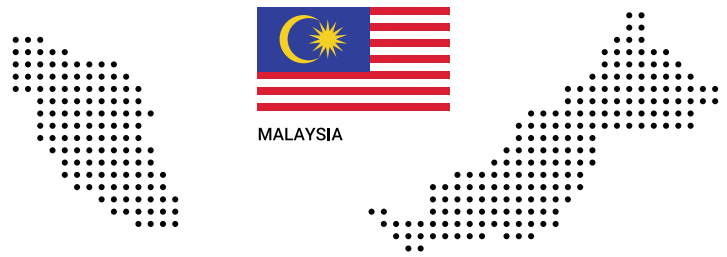
⁷¹ Scott, M. & Albert Salamanca, A. (2021) [Climate Change, Disasters and Internal Displacement in Asia and the Pacific: A Human Rights-Based Approach](#)

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)

1.5.4 Malaysia

Refugees: At the end of January 2024, there were 186,490 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia, around 108,310 of whom are Rohingya. Malaysia is a preferred destination for Rohingya onward movement due to the presence of a large Rohingya population in Malaysia, many of whom are working in the informal sector, including in agriculture and construction.⁷⁴



Malaysia does not have a comprehensive refugee law. There are provisions under the immigration law that could be used to provide some form of discretionary protection, for example through ministerial order for a person or class of persons to be exempt from penalisation.⁷⁵ In the absence of a national refugee framework, UNHCR conducts refugee status determination and referral for third country solutions where possible. In 2018, the government committed to signing the 1951 Convention, although this has not yet occurred.

Climate Change & Disasters: Climate change is contributing to increased rainfall, flooding and heat waves in Malaysia. It is predicted to exacerbate poverty and inequality, with climatic conditions particularly impacting low-wage workers in agriculture, fishing, and in the urban informal sector.⁷⁶ The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that there were 354,000 climate-related internal displacements between 2016 and 2021 in Malaysia, primarily caused by floods, landslides and storms.⁷⁷

Malaysia's disaster risk management (DRM) system provides for a multi-hazard approach to DRM, including Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR).⁷⁸ The country has not yet finalised a National Adaptation Plan (NAP). The National Policy on Climate Change (2009) does not mention migration, displacement or mobility in the context of climate change.⁷⁹

Humanitarian entry and stay: Migrants in situations of vulnerability may apply for a Special Pass, which is temporary and short term (usually 30 days). The Immigration Department has discretion if there are special circumstances such as illness, accident, or because the situation in their country of origin prevents safe return.⁸⁰ Notably, in 2005, Malaysia issued IMM13 permits to 30,000 Acehese following the 2004 tsunami, enabling them to temporarily stay and work in the country.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Crisis Group (2023) [Crisis Mounts for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh](#)

⁷⁵ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)

⁷⁶ The World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank (2021) [Climate Risk Country Profile: Malaysia](#)

⁷⁷ UNICEF (2023) [Weather-related disasters led to 43.1 million displacements of children over six years](#)

⁷⁸ IDRC (accessed 21 February 2024) [Resilience Library: Malaysia](#)

⁷⁹ Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia (2009) [National Policy on Climate Change](#)

⁸⁰ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)

⁸¹ Lego, J. (2012) [Protecting and Assisting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Malaysia: the role of the UNHCR, informal mechanisms, and the 'Humanitarian exception'](#); Munir-Asen, K. (2018) [\(Re\)negotiating Refugee Protection in Malaysia](#)

1.5.5 Thailand

Refugees: Thailand hosts 90,801 Myanmar refugees in nine temporary shelters on the Thai-Myanmar border and 4,998 urban refugees and asylum-seekers. However, these figures do not include Rohingya refugees, who are denied access to UNHCR registration and refugee status determination procedures, and are routinely detained or subject to boat push backs.⁸² In 2019, Thailand committed to establishing a national screening mechanism (NSM) to process forcibly displaced persons, and grant temporary stay to eligible persons.⁸³ While the scheme has officially initiated in September 2023, the impacts of its implementation remains uncertain. Human rights actors have expressed concerns with whether the NSM will be compliant with international law, whether refugees subject to NSM processing will be arrested and detained, and whether groups such as the Rohingya will be excluded on grounds of ‘national security.’⁸⁴

Climate Change & Disasters: Climate change-related hazards in Thailand include sea level rise, flooding, drought, cyclones and increased heat. Poor and marginalised groups are at risk of disproportionately greater loss and damage.⁸⁵ Thailand’s National Disaster Risk Management Plan (2015) contains provisions relating to evacuation, and some features of a human rights-based approach, such as prioritisation of ‘vulnerable groups’ during emergency evacuations.⁸⁶ It makes reference to ‘disaster-induced mobility’ and ‘building back better,’ but does not include a specific focus on displacement in the context of climate change. It defines ‘vulnerable group’ as including ‘people that have limited capacity in coping with disasters and require special attention and assistance’ including ‘children, elderly, persons with disability, persons suffering from serious illness, persons in exile, refugees, aliens.’ The Climate Change Master Plan (2015–2050) also makes brief reference to evacuation and recognises migration as a possible consequence of climate change impacts.

IOM has been implementing the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative in Thailand and across the region, focussing on implementing the MICIC Guidelines. Activities include supporting capacity-building and coordination of government to better address migrant vulnerabilities in disaster risk management, preparedness and response plans.⁸⁷

Humanitarian entry and stay: Under section 17 of the Immigration Act (1979) the Minister of Home Affairs may provide discretionary exemptions from provisions under the immigration law and permit any individual or group of migrants to stay in ‘certain special cases’ and on certain conditions.⁸⁸



⁸² Human Rights Watch (2022) [Thailand: Allow Newly Arrived Rohingya Access to Asylum](#)

⁸³ [Thailand National Screening Mechanism](#)

⁸⁴ Zsombor, P. (2023) [Rights Groups, Refugees Wary of Thailand's New Asylum Program](#)

⁸⁵ The World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank (2021) [Climate Risk Country Profile: Thailand](#)

⁸⁶ Scott, M. & Albert Salamanca, A. (2021) [Climate Change, Disasters and Internal Displacement in Asia and the Pacific: A Human Rights-Based Approach](#)

⁸⁷ IOM, [MICIC Initiative and Guidelines](#)

⁸⁸ UN OHCHR (2022) [Pathways to Migrant Protection: A mapping of national practice for admission and stay on human rights and humanitarian grounds in Asia and the Pacific](#)



Photo credit: Sina Hasan/ DRC Bangladesh

2 KEY FINDINGS

2.1 Climate change impacts on migration and displacement dynamics of Rohingya

2.1.1 Insecurity, conflicts and lack of rights are the primary drivers for onward movement

Onward movement of Rohingya refugees to other parts of the region has been occurring from Cox's Bazar refugee camps. According to the household survey, 48% of respondents confirmed that someone in their household had migrated or attempted to migrate outside of Cox's Bazar. Among these respondents (n=98), the primary driver for leaving Cox's Bazar was violence from armed groups or conflict within the camp (72/98), followed by the lack of livelihood opportunities (47/98) and restrictions on freedom of movement (32/98). Only six respondents nominated environmental hazards such as cyclones, floods, landslides and extreme weather, as a primary reason for moving (Figure 2). While there are likely intersections between climate change and drivers of movement, current evidence suggests that **climate change is not a primary driver of Rohingya mobility from Bangladesh.**

Many people have decided to leave the camp not because of climate change but because of issues such as conflicts, insecurity, lack of livelihood opportunities and hardships in the camps.

- Rohingya youth leader, male, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

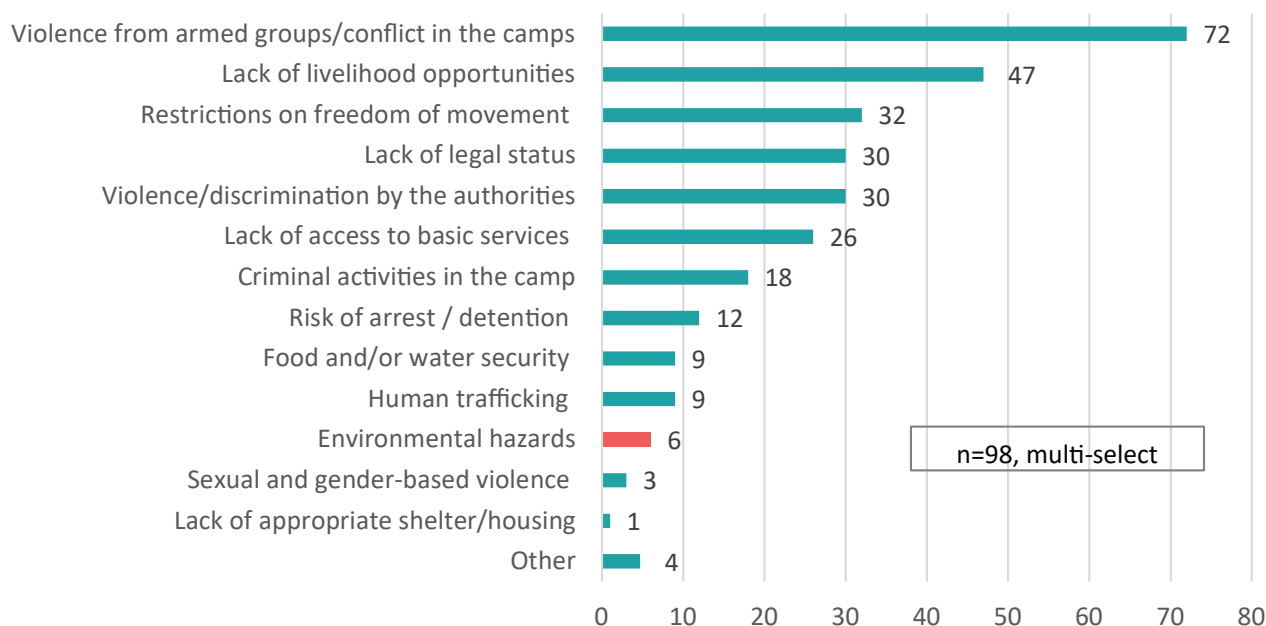
There are many reasons behind why I left the refugee camp for Indonesia. The reasons were lack of access to education, lack of livelihood opportunities, conflicts and fights among different gangs, and protection risks... also to get resettlement to a fourth country. When I was leaving for Indonesia, climate change wasn't even in my mind. I don't know anyone who highlighted climate change as a driver that led them to decide to leave Bangladesh. I haven't heard of anyone who left Bangladesh due to a cyclone or climate change impacts.

- Humanitarian Worker and Interpreter, man, Riau, Indonesia

Different people left the camp by choosing irregular migration for Indonesia or Malaysia. They narrate their reasons such as lack of livelihood opportunities, restrictions on movement, restrictions on occupation, gang fights, insufficient amount of humanitarian food assistance, lack of access to education, and lack of safety and security. None of them said that they had left the camp because of cyclones, floods or fires.

- Rohingya humanitarian worker and interpreter, man, Aceh, Indonesia

Figure 2: Reasons for current onward movement from Bangladesh (household surveys)



Correspondingly, interviews with most Rohingya key informants indicated that they did not perceive climate change as a key driver of onward movement from Bangladesh. Instead, they cited insecurity, crime, a lack of livelihoods and education, and a loss of hope for durable solutions as primary reasons. However, a small number of examples from the interviews indicated that environmental factors such as landslide and flood-prone shelters contributed to movement both within Cox's Bazar camps, and to Bhasan Char, and in some cases to other parts of the region, including India and Malaysia.

I have heard of a few households who migrated to India... because of floods and landslides affecting them in Cox's Bazar.

- Rohingya community leader, woman, Bhasan Char, Bangladesh

Key informants in the humanitarian sector also acknowledged that while there is weak direct link between environmental factors and current movement, climate change may contribute increasingly to movement in the region in the future as it 'exacerbates existing environmental, economic and social vulnerabilities.'⁸⁹ The dramatic increase in onward movement of Rohingya from Bangladesh via precarious sea journeys in 2023 - which may be characterised as secondary displacement - is indicative of a lack of solutions in the primary displacement context.

In Bangladesh, Rohingya are living in dire conditions. Climate change exacerbates existing vulnerability to a level that creates such chaos and unpredictability for them. There is no way it can't be influencing onward movement. But communities are facing violence and other pressures - being able to enunciate the extent of climate impacts is impossible as people don't have enough to eat everyday... Shelters have to be rebuilt every year - this has to be a push factor.

- Regional humanitarian actor

⁸⁹ IOM (2015) *Migration and Climate Change*, IOM Migration Research Series No. 31 p41

We know Asia is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Even if Rohingya are not primarily motivated by climate change to get onto boats, there are connections.

- Regional humanitarian actor

We are seeing a migration of Rohingya refugees from Cox's Bazar who have stayed there for a long time, who have not seen much improvement in their lives and who want improvement for their families. They move because of what is happening in the camps - including fire, monsoon, and cyclones. We are used to seeing men going first, now we are seeing more women and children and babies.

- Rohingya advocate

Climate change is not a major factor in the onward movement of Rohingya at this stage. Recent boat arrivals in Aceh are not telling us that they took the boat journey because of Cyclone Mocha.

- Regional humanitarian actor

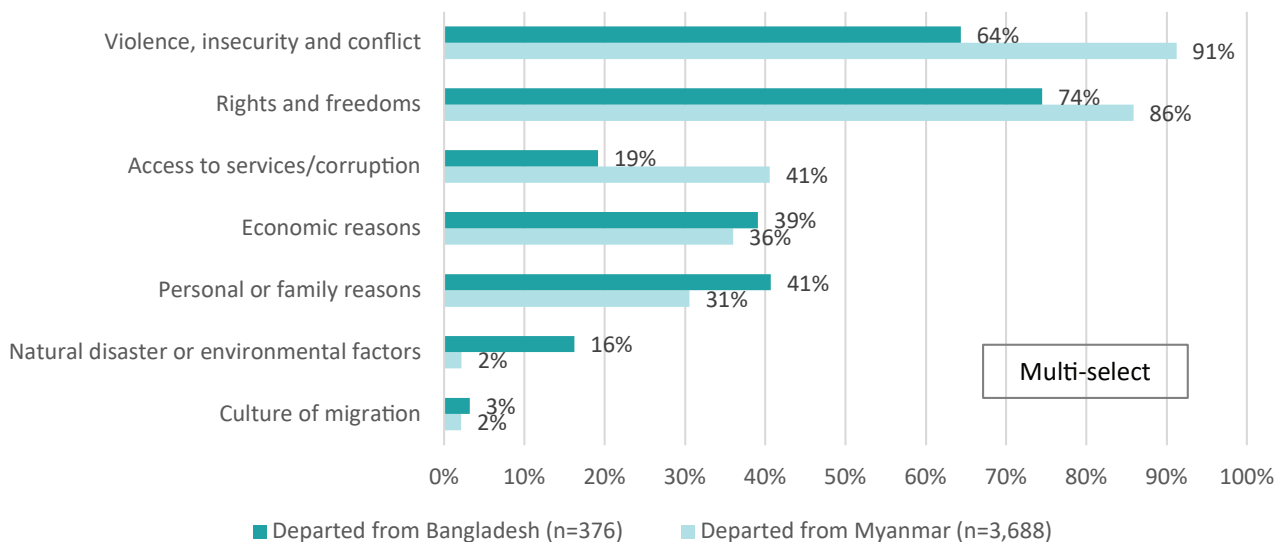
The people who are currently choosing irregular migration to leave the camps in Bangladesh don't attempt it happily or intentionally, but the deteriorating situation and environment in the camps have forced them to take those risky journeys.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Delhi, India

2.1.2 Stronger influence of environmental factors in driving onward movement from Bangladesh compared to movement from Myanmar

These findings are consistent with the results from MMC 4Mi surveys conducted in 2022 and 2023, which encompassed 4,064 Rohingya respondents across India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The majority of respondents highlighted experiences of violence, insecurity, and conflict (89%) and deprivation of rights and freedoms (85%) as reasons for leaving with only 3% cited natural disaster or environmental factors. Notably, upon analysing the data based on the country of departure, it was observed that respondents who departed from Bangladesh (16%) were eight times more likely to cite natural disasters and environmental factors as drivers for leaving, compared to those who departed from Myanmar (2%) (see Figure 3). This suggests that while environmental factors are not the primary causes of mobility among Rohingya, they do play a role as one of the drivers, especially prevalent in the case of Rohingya in Bangladesh.

Figure 3: Drivers for leaving countries of origin among Rohingya respondents in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand (4Mi Surveys)



2.1.3 Environmental factors negatively impact living conditions and livelihoods for Rohingya in regional host countries

Data collected in key host countries across the region, including India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, echoes findings in Bangladesh, indicating that climate impacts do not directly trigger movement among Rohingya communities. For instance, in India, some Rohingya migrate to urban areas such as Calcutta where they have family or community links. Climate or environmental factors were not cited directly as a reason for moving to or within India. However, environmental factors do contribute to various challenges that affect their living conditions and livelihoods in the host countries, which may potentially influence the decision to move. A Rohingya community leader in Delhi reported challenges related to cold weather extremes, saying, “*The cold weather is so extreme in the camp of India that we suffer very badly. We don’t have electricity, so we can’t use heaters to keep our tents warm.*” Others referred to common “hailstorms and extreme cold weather” impacting daily life and affecting people’s ability to go to work. Similarly, recent boat arrivals in Indonesia faced poor living conditions in tents on the beach for extended periods of time. They were exposed to harsh weather elements, including strong winds, flooding, and cyclones, without access to clean water, resulting in numerous health issues.

Within the last two months, many of our people reached Banda Aceh. Since there are too many, they haven't been provided with proper accommodation yet. They have been staying in a coastal area where they are at risk of climate change impacts. When a strong wind or cyclone occurs, it affects them very badly. When it's cold, they suffer from the cold weather. When it's hot, it can also affect them. They have been in tents which are in really poor conditions in Banda Aceh. Yesterday, it rained there. I saw a video, in which their tents appeared flooded. I saw some of them holding their tents because the wind was blowing the tents away.

- Rohingya humanitarian worker, man, Riau, Indonesia

In Malaysia, Rohingya are often living in overcrowded urban spaces, doing labour-intensive work in the informal sector – in factories, agriculture, and construction – exposed to many hazards, some of which are linked to climate change, such as increasing heat and hydroclimatic extremes. There were also reported cases of Rohingya in Malaysia becoming homeless due to flooding, and community-led responses to provide support to those impacted, in the absence of any formal support from authorities.

Floods are very common and serious in Kota Bharu city and in neighbouring areas [in Kelantan, a northeast state in Malaysia]... When our people were affected by the flood last month, we gathered some contributions from ourselves individually so that we could support them.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Kelantan, Malaysia

Interviews with refugee-serving organisations in these countries revealed gaps in responses toward climate-related issues, as immediate humanitarian concerns including basic life-saving humanitarian assistance, and issues such as boat pushbacks, detention and refoulement of Rohingya often take precedence over addressing climate change impacts on Rohingya communities. Despite this, several interviewees recognised the potential climate impacts on Rohingya communities due to the region's high vulnerability to climate change.⁹⁰ The precarious situation is further compounded by the fact that Rohingya are often marginalised, driven underground, and lack access to documentation or (even temporary) legal status, rendering them among the most overlooked groups in national climate policy responses. This oversight extends to critical areas such as disaster preparedness, emergency response, shelter and internal displacement. Additionally, the lack of access to essential services, protection and education exacerbates the vulnerability faced by Rohingya in these host countries.⁹¹

⁹⁰ India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand are among the world's 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change. See: GermanWatch (2021) [Global Climate Risk Index 2021](#); and NTS-Asia (2023) [Climate Change and Security](#)

⁹¹ Save the Children (2021) [No Safe Haven: The plight of Rohingya children across Asia](#)

2.1.4 Environmental factors drive internal displacement, evacuation and relocation within Bangladesh

While the connection between environmental factors and cross-border migration appears weak based on the household survey findings, the research shows significant evidence of climate or environmental hazards driving internal displacement, predominantly temporary in nature, within the camps in Bangladesh. Rohingya in the camps reported pre-emptive and reactive mobility in response to hazards including floods, landslides, and cyclones. This underscores the role of environmental factors on mobility of Rohingya as both a positive and negative adaptive response to climate-related risks. Survey respondents indicated a need for strengthened adaptation measures through more proactive planned evacuations, as well as support for relocation of shelters from hazard-prone areas. Severe restrictions on freedom of movement greatly limit the capacity for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to move internally when faced with imminent danger (see further analysis below in relation to *Involuntary Immobility*). Several indicated that they were prevented from relocating their shelters, despite clear indicators of risk and a desire to do so. Others reported instances of people reluctantly agreeing to be relocated to Bhasan Char, when prevented from relocating within Cox's Bazar (see Box 1).

If there is extreme rain we seek alternative shelter. Our shelters are under the trees, which is why we have to shift to our relatives' shelters or NGO shelters.

- 41-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

In the last monsoon, the landslide happened near my shelter, and my shelter was partially damaged. IOM volunteers relocated us to a school where we were given food and water for three days until we built our shelter again.

- 39-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

For the monsoon, we prepare as much as we can by relocating from the possible flood and landslide areas.

- 39-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

When our shelters are damaged due to landslides or flooding, we move to our relatives' shelters or NGO safe havens

- 44-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

2.1.5 Environmental factors exacerbate risks during already hazardous onward journeys

Climate change, leading to more extreme and unpredictable weather, significantly affects the already perilous journey to and within Southeast Asia, typically undertaken via maritime route. The situation for Rohingya embarking on journeys on the Andaman Sea is already described as ‘catastrophic’ by humanitarian actors in the region. Maritime movements are seasonal, with relatively less irregular maritime movement during monsoon and cyclone seasons. In 2023, a staggering 13% of Rohingya embarked on the sea journeys were reported to have perished or gone missing, marking the highest recorded death rate to date.⁹² Humanitarian responders acknowledged that although climate change may make weather and ocean conditions less predictable, and possibly more dangerous, current work on irregular movement in the region did not include a focus on how climate change may be impacting onward movement or related risks. One noted, ‘We currently have El Niño and the Indian Ocean Dipole interacting, it is likely that climate change will increase the risks for people at sea.’ Climate change is reported to be increasing the frequency and intensity of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal, with warming oceans acting as energy sources.⁹³

Many Rohingya have been leaving the camps of Bangladesh for a third country through dangerous routes. They aren't travelling legally, but through irregular migration. If a cyclone or any extreme weather appears when they are travelling by the land route to Malaysia, it will affect them very badly inside the forest. If it happens when they are travelling by water, it will turn into a fatal tragedy. We have heard of many parents whose sons or daughters disappeared from the sea.

- Rohingya human rights advocate, man, Delhi, India

A majority of Rohingya key informants perceived climate change to already be negatively impacting Rohingya on the move in the region, referring to loss of life and examples of boats sinking due to cyclones and extreme weather en route. 72% of people surveyed were either ‘worried’ or ‘extremely worried’ that environmental hazards (that may be linked to climate change) could make any onward migration (via land or sea) more dangerous.

The people who are travelling to Malaysia by water may encounter random changes in weather in the middle of the sea. The changes can be a cyclone, heavy rain or strong wind. Because of such random changes in the weather, many migrating people have lost their lives in the middle of the journey.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

⁹² While the highest number of reported missing or dead was 730 in 2014, it constituted 1.2% of the 63,000 total departures in the same year. In 2023, there were 569 recorded deaths or missing persons, out of over 4,500 total departures. See UNHCR (2015) [South-east Asia Mixed Maritime Movements April-June 2015](#); UNHCR (2024) [UNHCR: Urgent action needed to address dramatic rise in Rohingya deaths at sea](#)

⁹³ ETV Bharat (5 December 2023) [Cyclone 'Michuang': El Niño, Climate Change Multiplies Storm's Impact By Manifold](#)

When I was leaving Bangladesh, the weather was cold. We experienced the cold weather for the first two days only. Since the third day, the weather has turned so hot that we suffered extremely. The hot weather impacted us very badly on the ship. We were on the ship for 25 days.

- Rohingya humanitarian worker and interpreter, man, Riau, Indonesia

A pupil of mine whom I was teaching when I was also in Bangladesh. He was fed up with the deteriorating camp's situation and problems. Finally, he made up his mind to leave the camp and find a place where he hoped he wouldn't face the same problems. He selected Indonesia as his destination, and he chose irregular migration for Indonesia with the hope of getting resettled to a European country where he would be able to study and have opportunities to achieve prosperity. Last year he left the camp for Indonesia. He was travelling by water. Unfortunately, he lost his life as the ship he was on was hit by a cyclone in the middle of the sea. His parents are still crying for him. A few days ago, I phoned them, and they still hope that their son is alive. They were asking me about him. I often try to console them and help them accept the truth about their son.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

When I was leaving the camp, it was hot weather. So, we didn't take any warm clothes with us. When we reached the forest [the transit point], the weather was cool. We suffered from the cool weather extremely inside the forest. Most of us got fever because of the extreme cold weather... We had to suffer from illnesses for days without any treatment. We experienced the hot weather on the ship for the first four days. After those four days, it started raining and we were soaking in the rain and our bodies were shivering. We were wearing the same clothes all the time. The ship wasn't big, yet there were 300 people on it including me. Most of us suffered from itchy skin diseases and other health problems.

A woman on our ship died from hunger and thirst... During our journey to Indonesia, adult women were very affected on the ship. They were seasick that's why they became weakest. Extreme weather normally affects small children, but they are taken care of by their mothers. In the process of taking care of children, the mothers don't care for themselves and become victims of the extreme weather.

- Rohingya humanitarian worker, man, Aceh, Indonesia

2.1.6 Restrictions on freedom of movement and lack of access to livelihoods cause life-threatening involuntary immobility during climate-related events

Of the respondents who said that nobody in their household had migrated or attempted to migrate (n=102), 44% indicated this was because they were unable to do so (*involuntary immobility*), not because they did not want to.

Involuntary immobility and restrictions on freedom of movement are highly relevant considerations in examining the context of climate change impacts on Rohingya. Disenfranchised and marginalised groups are more likely to be “trapped”⁹⁴ in “circumstances where they are at once more vulnerable to environmental change and less able to move away from it.”⁹⁵ This also challenges the oversimplified speculation that climate change will lead to large-scale migration. In reality, many individuals will not be moving, either because they are not able to or they do not want to, or both, yet these populations at risk of becoming trapped are often overlooked in discussions on climate-related migration and displacement.⁹⁶

Displaced Rohingya are effectively contained, with very limited freedom of movement in both in internal displacement camps in Myanmar,⁹⁷ in refugee camps in Bangladesh,⁹⁸ as well as in other host countries including India, Malaysia, and Thailand where they are deemed “illegal migrants”. This poses serious protection challenges, particularly in the case of sudden onset disasters like cyclones and floodings. The ability of Rohingya to move out of harm's way in an emergency is dependent on government policy, and whether this permits and facilitates mobility, emergency evacuations, and planned relocations.

Respondents in Cox's Bazar were asked to consider what the **primary barriers** to future migration would be. The top barriers raised were:

1. Government of Bangladesh policy (e.g. restrictions on freedom of movement) (84%);
2. Financial reasons (e.g. lack of money needed to travel) (61%);
3. Lack of legal status and documentation (57%);
4. Fear of arrest and detention (39%); and
5. Lack of safe and legal pathways to migrate (26%)

Irregular migrants and undocumented groups such as stateless refugees, face additional barriers to movement, both within and across borders. Additionally, the lack of rights to livelihood opportunities deprives them further of the means needed to leave. This forced or involuntary immobility takes on a new dimension in the context of climate change and climate-related disasters, where an inability to move can significantly decrease the ability to withstand, and even survive environmental hazards. **Restrictions on freedom of movement and lack of access to livelihoods in displacement settings can therefore be seen as life-threatening, particularly in the context of rapid onset disasters.**

I have been thinking of different ways about how we can leave this camp and travel to a third country safely. But I didn't find any safe routes. It will be best for our future if we can be resettled to a third country.

- 27-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

⁹⁴ Black, R. and Collyer, M. (2014) [Populations 'trapped' at times of crisis](#) Forced Migration Review

⁹⁵ The Government Office for Science, London (2011) [Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change, Final Project Report](#)

⁹⁶ Mixed Migration Centre (2022) [Climate change, environmental stressors, and mixed migration](#)

⁹⁷ Danish Refugee Council and Stockholm Environment Institute (2022) [Exploring the Environment-Conflict-Migration Nexus in Asia, Asia Climate Framework - Research Report](#) p2

⁹⁸ Youth Congress Rohingya (2023) [This persecution is the worst there is: Restrictions on Rohingya freedom of movement in Bangladesh](#)

In an emergency situation, if we are denied permission by the authorities to go out, we may consider taking an alternative route to avoid detection.

- 45-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Due to the police checkpoints at every road junction, we can't travel from one camp to another. These restrictions should be removed so that we can at least travel within the camp freely.

- 48-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

We have to carry patients on our shoulders to the hospital because we are not allowed vehicles within the camps.

- 41-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

If we need to leave the camp in an emergency, we feel fear in our hearts, as we might be stopped at a checkpoint, face mistreatment, or encounter attempts to extort bribes.

- 24-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

There are a lot of things which don't have a solution unless the government gives us freedom of movement.

- 72-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Box 1: Relocation to - and effective containment on - Bhasan Char

In addition to the camps in Cox's Bazar, since May 2020, Bangladesh has been housing Rohingya refugees on Bhasan Char in the Bay of Bengal, a remote silt island prone to tidal surges, monsoons, cyclones and flooding.⁹⁹ The unstable and low-lying island was formed by sediment at the mouth of the Meghna River within the last 20 years.¹⁰⁰ The Government of Bangladesh refers to congestion in the mainland camps as rationale for the relocation of more than 32,000 people (of a planned 100,000) from Cox's Bazar to the island to date. As of January 2024, Bhasan Char housed more than 600 female single parent caregivers and more than 500 people with a disability. More than half (56%) of those living on the island are children.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Nguyen, H. & Lewis, T. (2022) [Bhasan Char and Refugee 'Warehousing'](#) The Diplomat

¹⁰⁰ Reuters (2018) [A remote home for the Rohingya](#)

¹⁰¹ Government of Bangladesh & UNHCR (2024) [Rohingya Refugee Response/Bangladesh: Bhasan Char Population Factsheet \(as of 31 January 2024\)](#)

Bangladesh authorities have promoted a narrative that Bhasan Char provides safer, more spacious and more secure shelters, to encourage Rohingya to relocate.¹⁰² However, serious concerns have been raised from the outset about the remoteness of the island (which is three to five hours by boat from the mainland), as well as a lack of emergency preparedness, access to healthcare and humanitarian support, and basic habitability.¹⁰³

In February 2024, eleven people including six children were injured in a fire caused by a cooking gas accident on the island. Despite the injured being evacuated by speed boat to Noakhali and Chittagong, five children succumbed to their injuries.¹⁰⁴

Humanitarian actors at the national and regional levels expressed strong doubts about whether the island could be safely evacuated in the event of a disaster. Currently, transport to and from the island relies on navy vessels and is dependent on favourable sea and weather conditions. The low-lying geography of the island, surrounded by an embankment, forms a natural basin, giving rise to serious flooding risks.

All camps surveyed had seen instances of relocation to Bhasan Char, with camps 1, 5, 8 and 9 experiencing higher levels of relocation as they were more congested. Rohingya key informants referred to cases where people agreed to move to Bhasan Char because they were coerced, or because they had no other options. Examples included households in Cox's Bazar whose shelters were damaged, or were facing constant risk of landslides and flooding, who were not permitted to move to another location within the camp, who therefore ultimately signed up for relocation to Bhasan Char. Further, some households that lost their shelters in fires in Cox's Bazar were reported to have been forced to agree to move to the island.

Others were forced to relocate to Bhasan Char because they were facing protection risks within the camps. One example was provided of someone who decided to move to Bhasan Char because of congestion in the camps and challenges accessing latrines and bathrooms in Cox's Bazar, particularly for his unmarried daughters, who "would have to go to a different block to use the latrine which was very uncomfortable and shameful."

Once on the island, relocated Rohingya report that they continue to face environmental extremes and natural hazards, including temperature extremes, strong winds, cyclones, monsoon rains, flooding and tidal surges. Those on Bhasan Char have discouraged others from relocating there. Rohingya community leaders reported that many people had attempted to leave Bhasan Char to return to the mainland, due to the "hostile environment," however those who were discovered by Bangladeshi authorities faced arrest, detention, abuse and extortion.



The people who have already been relocated to Bhasan Char didn't move there intentionally or happily. Some of them were forced directly or indirectly to relocate there. Some others were persuaded by showing them more facilities and services on the island than in Cox's Bazar. Some others who were facing threats or insecurity here decided to move there.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



¹⁰² Neef et al (2023) [The Conflict, Climate Change, and Displacement Nexus Revisited: The Protracted Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh](#) Journal of Peacebuilding & Development

¹⁰³ Human Rights Watch (2011) [An Island Jail in the Middle of the Sea](#)

¹⁰⁴ BDNews24 (29 February 2024) None of five children burnt in Bhasan Char fire survives

“

I had a colleague whose shelter was on top of a hill. He reported his problem to the CiC officer and humanitarian organisations many times. His problem was that his shelter was at high risk of a landslide, and he had small children who could be affected fatally. He kept requesting to be moved elsewhere, but his requests were not responded to. At last, he decided to enlist to be relocated to Bachan Char Island.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

“

The government authorities have relocated some Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char Island. Through my personal sources, I often get information about how badly the climate change and environmental issues have been impacting them on the island. They don't have access to enough clean water. There is less vegetation around their shelters. The weather seasons are extreme there. They have been suffering different health problems. The land is salty, surrounded by seas of salt water. Before them, there was no human habitation. Consequently, they are facing a hostile environment.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

“

With the grace of Allah, we haven't experienced any serious climate change impacts since our relocation to this island. We are very worried about it because we are aware that a serious climate change impact can cause major destruction here. We feel very insecure and unsafe on this island. Most of us want to leave and go somewhere safe. But we utter a word about leaving the island and the government security forces harm us. The island isn't a safe or inhabitable environment. Because of its hostile atmosphere, we have been suffering from different health problems. Moreover, we haven't been accessing effective health services.

- Rohingya community leader, woman, Bhasan Char, Bangladesh

“

There are some cyclone shelters and three-storey buildings on the island that could be used as shelters, but considering they are in the middle of the ocean, if a tidal wave came in, I don't know how much time they would have to get themselves to safety. If there was a tsunami, I don't think they would stand a chance.

- National humanitarian actor, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

“

The biggest issue is a lack of mobility. We have been lucky that many cyclones have missed Bhasan Char. The concern is how you would move people off the island if needed.

- Regional humanitarian actor



If there was an extreme cyclone, and a direct hit on Bhasan Char, there is nowhere else to go. There would be very limited access to respond, as the only way to get there is via navy support, depending on the seas. It would probably not be a top priority for authorities to get resources and supplies onto the island.

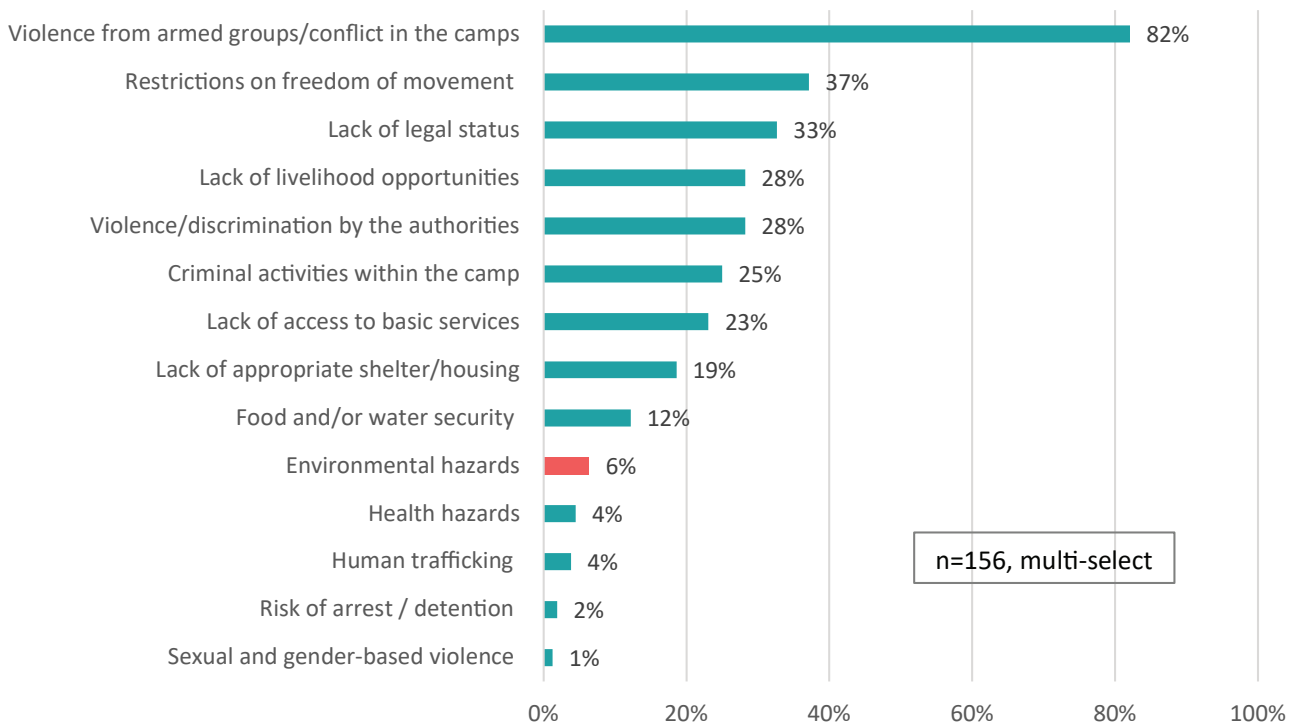
- National humanitarian actor



2.1.7 Environmental factors may increasingly influence future mobility decisions

In the household surveys, the respondents were asked if they were considering leaving Cox’s Bazar in the future and if so, what would influence their future decisions to migrate. 78% indicated that they are considering leaving Cox’s Bazar in the future,¹⁰⁵ with over half among these respondents (51%, n=156) intending to return to Myanmar. Consistent with previous findings, among these respondents intending to leave Cox’s Bazar in the future, violence and conflict within the community in Cox’s Bazar was overwhelmingly nominated (82%) as a primary reason for possible future migration, while environmental hazards (were cited by only 6% of respondents, suggesting that it is not currently a primary concern for most respondents in relation to future mobility decisions (see Figure 4).

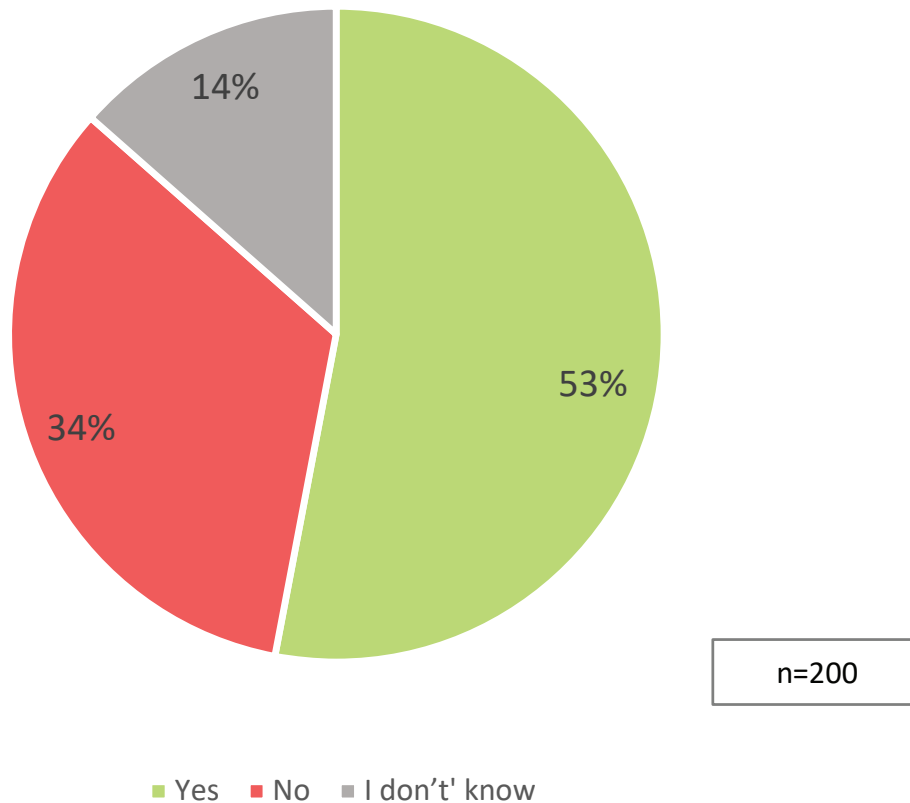
Figure 4: If you are considering leaving Cox's Bazar, what would be the three primary reasons for leaving? (household surveys)



¹⁰⁵ 5% said no and 18% said they don't know.

However, upon further probing,¹⁰⁶ **53% of respondents indicated that worsening environmental factors in Bangladesh, such as cyclones and flooding, would likely contribute to future decisions to migrate** (see Figure 5). This suggests that while individuals may be influenced by climate and environmental factors in their decision-making process, they may not readily recognise these influences, as they often occupy a secondary position in people's minds. Furthermore, the complex interplay between climate and environmental factors and other drivers may not be readily acknowledged due to their indirect influence, further complicating the decision-making process surrounding mobility.

Figure 5: If environmental factors worsen, would this be likely to contribute to your future decision to migrate? (household surveys)



In the survey, the respondents were also asked if they would consider returning to Myanmar if the environmental hazards make life in the camps unsustainable or too difficult and 67% of respondents indicated "Yes". This suggests a strong influence of environmental factors in decision to return, raising the possibility of '**climate-induced forced return**', a little understood or studied phenomenon.

Recent research in Pakistan found that Afghan refugees faced disproportionate impacts from the devastating 2022 floods, which submerged one third of the country and impacted 33 million people. Undocumented refugees, who were already living in precarious situations and had limited or no access to disaster response and recovery support, were particularly vulnerable. With no formal refugee protection, no legal status, no freedom of movement, and no access to livelihoods, undocumented refugees were forced to live on the margins of society. Many were recent arrivals, having fled Afghanistan following the 2021 Taliban takeover. Without resources, support to rebuild, or the freedom to internally relocate after their shelters were washed away, some were left with no option but to return to Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷ The prospect of a similar outcome for climate-affected Rohingya in Bangladesh raises novel questions relating to voluntariness of return and international responsibilities to provide protection in the context of already-displaced populations facing climate change risks.

¹⁰⁶ The respondents were queried regarding the potential impact of environmental factors in on their migration intention. Specifically, they were asked, "If environmental factors worsen, would this be likely to contribute to your future decision to migrate?"

¹⁰⁷ Nasar, Nafisa, International Center for Refugee and Migration Studies, unpublished research, presented at the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law's Emerging Scholars Workshop in November 2023

2.2 Climate change as ‘threat multiplier’

2.2.1 Current living conditions in Bangladesh

Household survey respondents were asked to rate to what extent, were they impacted by the key issues in the camps. Of the 14 issues surveyed, the 10 most pressing issues¹⁰⁸ impacting Rohingya in the camps were identified as, in order (see Figure 6):

1. Lack of legal status (e.g. visa, citizenship)
2. Restrictions on freedom of movement
3. Violence from armed groups/conflict within community
4. Lack of livelihood opportunities
5. Lack of access to basic services (e.g. health, education)
6. Criminal activities within the camps (e.g. arson, kidnapping, drugs, theft)
7. Lack of appropriate shelter/housing
8. Environmental hazards
9. Food and/or water insecurity
10. Health hazards (e.g. poor air, disease, poor sanitation)

Of the issues identified by respondents as ‘extreme’ or ‘significant’, 98% of respondents were of the view that the problems had worsened over the past 24 months.



We are not able to have beef curry and fresh fish even once a month. Whatever we get from food ration cards, we are surviving with it. My paralysed daughter needs to take medicine everyday which we need to buy, that's why we cannot spend money on other things.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



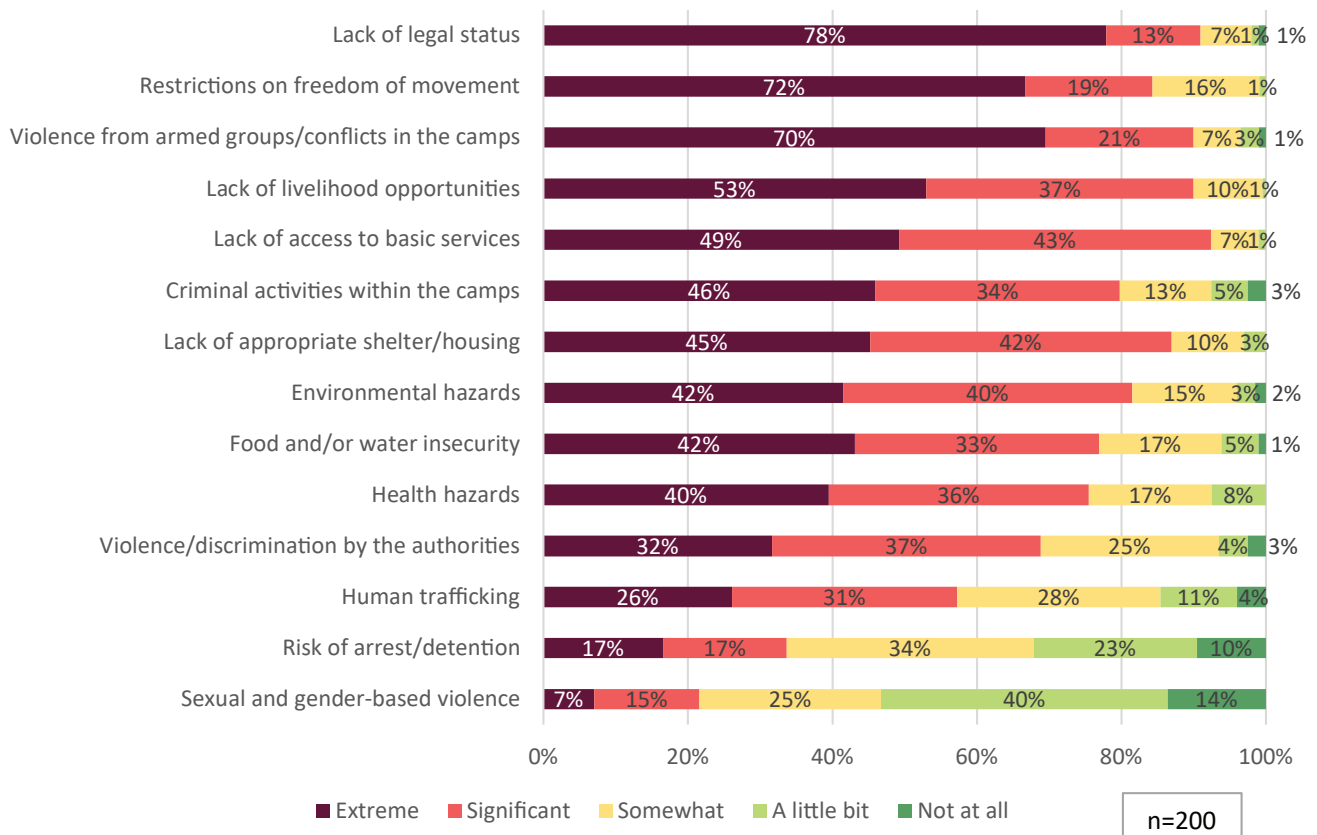
Due to the congested and overcrowded state of the camps, many problems and conflicts have been appearing among us...I want to suggest the world and humanitarians to change and improve the camp's infrastructure. More livelihood opportunities should be available for us. Access to formal education should be available in the camps. The government authorities should take strict punitive measures to mitigate gang and criminal activities. The humanitarians should consult us and consider our perspectives regarding implementation of services or facilities.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



¹⁰⁸ This includes the proportion of respondents who selected extreme and significant.

Figure 6: To what extent do you see this issue as a problem affecting you in the camps? (household surveys)



Aligned with the findings on the drivers of mobility, other challenges such as the lack of rights and insecurity within the camps took precedence over environmental concerns, with environmental hazards being ranked as the eighth most pressing issue among respondents in the camps. Almost half of respondents (42%) identified it as an ‘extreme’ problem and 40% identified it as ‘significant’ problem, suggesting the major impacts environmental hazards had on the respondents (see Figure 6).

The research also found a perceived lack of awareness regarding climate change, as indicated by both interviews with Rohingya key informants and survey data. More than half of the household survey respondents (54%) within the camps reported ‘very little’ or ‘no’ prior understanding of what climate change is and its potential impacts on their lives in Cox’s Bazar. This might elucidate why some might not immediately acknowledge the potential influence of environmental hazards on their migration decisions or living conditions unless being prompted to do so.



Very few of our people have any understanding about climate change and environmental impacts. Through my experience and interactions with people, I have observed them acting surprised and unaware of the term, ‘climate change’. Whenever I have asked them about climate change, they will just name the weather seasons.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh



Most of our people don't have an understanding of climate change or its impacts. When there is any sign of a cyclone, the humanitarian volunteers use loudspeakers and announce it so that we can make some preparations. Even in such situations, some of our people go to work or to the sea for fishing because they aren't aware of climate change and its impacts. They think they can be hurt only when Allah wishes.

- Rohingya community leader, woman, Bhasan Char, Bangladesh

If there is any random change in the weather pattern, most of my community people would say that it has happened with the will of Allah. They will never use the term, 'climate change'. If they are affected by any disaster, they will consider it as their misfortune or a will of Allah.

- Rohingya human rights advocate, Delhi, India

I don't think 90% of our Rohingya people have enough understanding of climate change or its impacts. I can claim that most of us have never heard the term, 'climate change'.

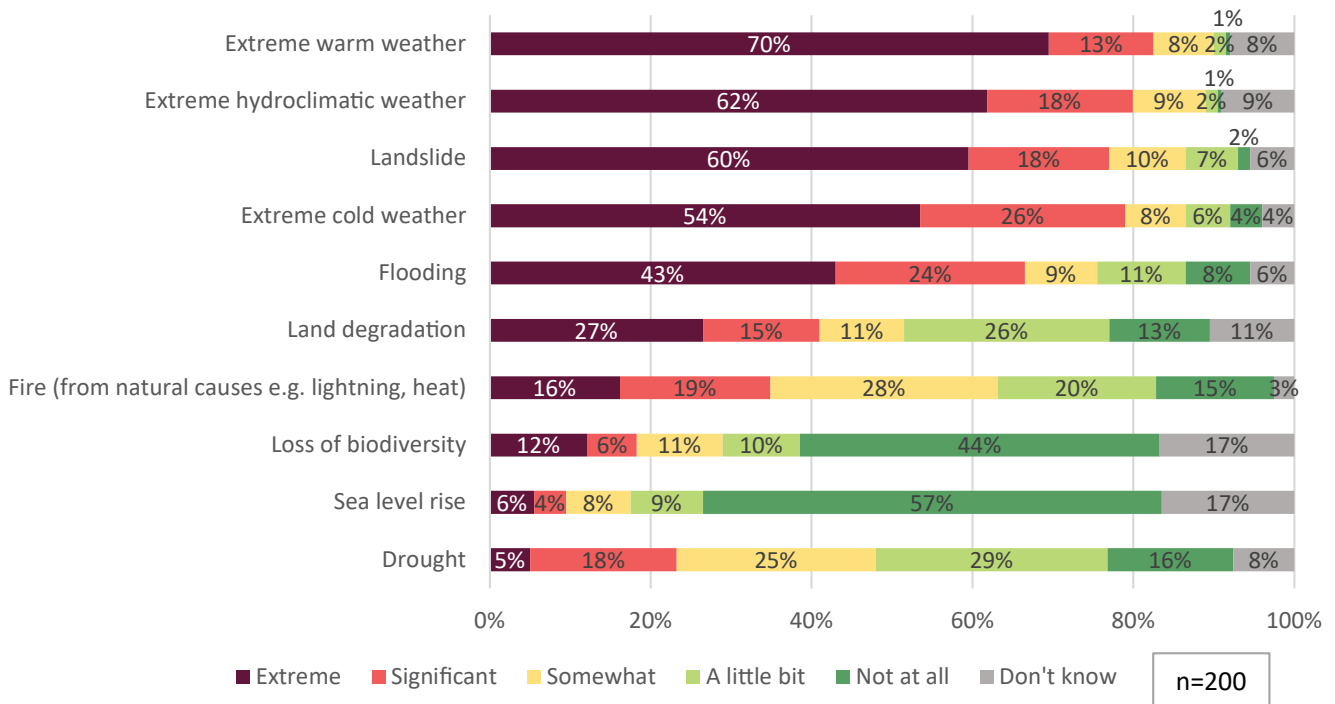
- Rohingya humanitarian worker and interpreter, man, Riau, Indonesia

They can feel climate change and its impacts through their practical experience, but they don't have academic knowledge or understanding about it. They aren't familiar with the term, 'climate change'.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Respondents were then further probed about 10 environmental impacts (that may be linked to climate change) and whether they had experienced each in the camps since their arrival, answering 1) Not at all; 2) A little bit; 3) Somewhat; 4) Significant; 5) Extreme; or 6) I don't know (see Figure 7). Prior to this, the survey volunteers provided some basic information to survey respondents about climate change and its possible impacts, to ensure understanding on this survey question.

Figure 7: Since your arrival in Cox's Bazar, how much have you been impacted by the following environmental issues? (household surveys)



Of the 10 issues surveyed, the five most pressing environmental issues¹⁰⁹ (that may be linked to climate change) impacting Rohingya in the camps were identified as, in order:

- 1) Extreme warm weather
- 2) Extreme hydroclimatic events (e.g. cyclones, storms, rain)
- 3) Landslides
- 4) Extreme cold weather
- 5) Flooding

Of the environmental issues identified by respondents as 'extreme' or 'significant', 95% of respondents were of the view that the problems had worsened since their arrival in Cox's Bazar.

Since we arrived here, the warmth has increased which has impacted our emotional health.

- 28-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Flooding has become worse for us since we arrived in Cox's Bazar because our shelter is located in such a place where it floods each year.

- 81-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Respondents who identified environmental issues that caused extreme and significant impacts were asked a follow up question on **how these environmental issues are negatively impacting their living conditions within the camps**, drawing links between environmental impacts and other aspects of their life. The most

¹⁰⁹ This includes those selected extreme and significant.

prevalent negative impacts across the top three most pressing environmental issues were on: safety, peace, and security; physical or mental health; and shelter and infrastructure.

In the camp of Bangladesh, our people have been experiencing extreme cold weather, extreme hot weather, extreme rainy weather, more floods, more landslides, fires and cyclones. These climate change impacts affect them much because the camp's infrastructure isn't suitable, and shelters are in poor condition. The humanitarian relief has been insufficient for them. Moreover, they have been underprivileged in terms of having any occupation or income sources in Bangladesh.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Bangkok, Thailand

The extreme weather particularly impacts on daily labour workers. If they can't go to their work, they can't earn their daily wages which affects their ability to manage daily consumer goods for their families. Climate change doesn't only affect people physically but also socially and psychologically. Climate change can also cause rises in the prices of our daily consumer goods.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

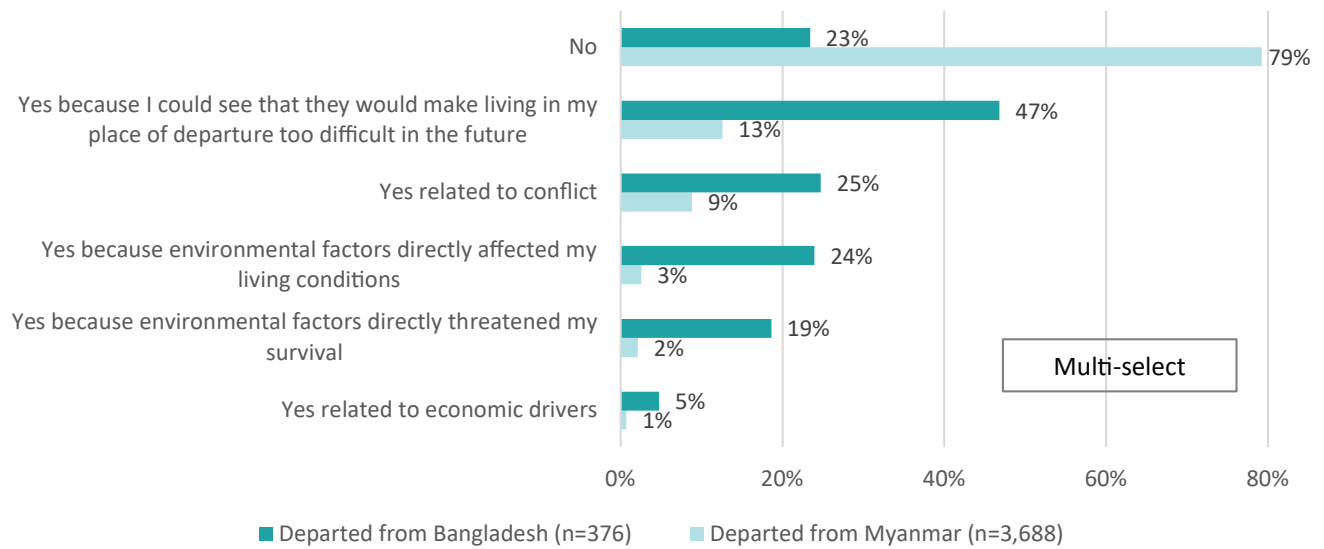
2.2.2 Interactions between environmental factors and pre-existing vulnerabilities

As outlined above, the majority of surveyed Rohingya did not identify environmental hazards as a primary driver of current mobility (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). However, on further examination, it becomes evident that environmental factors, potentially linked to climate change, interact with, and sometimes acts as a **'threat multiplier'** in relation to other drivers of movement. According to 4Mi data, while only 16% of respondents reported initially reported climate-related disaster or environment factors as primary drivers for leaving Bangladesh (see Figure 3), further probing revealed that more than two-thirds of respondents (77%) acknowledged the influence of climate and environmental factors on their decision to leave (see Figure 8). Notably, this proportion is more than three times higher than those who departed from Myanmar (21% mentioned yes), indicating a weaker influence of environmental factors as an indirect driver of movement from Myanmar.

We have been experiencing more climate change impacts in Bangladesh than we went through in Myanmar. The weather is extreme in Bangladesh. Climate change is when the weather is abnormally and extremely hot, cold or rainy. It also includes occurrence of strong winds and cyclones.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Delhi, India

Figure 8: Were issues relating to the climate or the natural environment a factor in your decision to leave your country of departure? (4Mi surveys)



As demonstrated in the 4Mi data, the influence of climate or environment factors in the decision to leave was indirect, with notable concerns observed in its potential impacts on the living conditions in Bangladesh (47%). The respondents also reported intersections of climate or environmental factors with conflicts (25%), existing living conditions, survival (19%), and economic drivers (5%) (see Figure 8). The 4Mi findings align with the insights from household surveys and interviews, which established connections between environmental factors and various aspects related to living conditions such as shelter and infrastructure, health and sanitation, food and water security, as well as livelihoods, as detailed below.

2.2.2.1 Shelter and infrastructure

The rapid expansion of refugee settlements, especially following the mass arrivals in 2017, had significantly accelerated deforestation in Cox's Bazar. Government restrictions on permanent construction materials, coupled with the lack of sustainable energy sources, have compelled Rohingya refugees to resort to cutting down adjacent forests for fuel and shelter materials. This has resulted in the clearance of approximately 1,485 hectares of land by January 2018 and subsequent soil destabilisation.¹¹⁰ Insights from interviews also showed that the nature of shelters made from tarpaulin and bamboo failed to provide adequate protection against monsoon rains, strong winds, cyclones, and extreme cold or heat, leaving Rohingya refugees highly vulnerable to climate and environmental hazards.¹¹¹ This intersection between shelter and climate-related factors operates in a multi-directional manner, contributing to environmental degradation, while simultaneously increasing human vulnerability to climate impacts. Addressing these intertwined challenges necessitates holistic approaches that recognise the interplay between environmental degradation, displacement dynamics, and the urgent need for sustainable shelter solutions.

In recent years, the weather seasons have been extreme over the camp. During the hot weather, our people have to suffer from unbearable heat inside shelters made of plastic.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

¹¹⁰ Bremner, L. (2020) [Sedimentary logics and the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh](#) Political Geography Volume 77

¹¹¹ Kamruzzaman, Md. (2021) [Death toll in Cox's Bazar from floods, landslides rises to 24](#); Save the Children (2023) [Bangladesh: Rohingya child and her mother killed in mudslide in Cox's Bazar camp](#)

Occurrences of storms, cyclones, and heavy precipitation have increased recently. Many of our people have died due to flooding, landslides, cyclones, and heavy wind. It happened because our people didn't have strong shelters. We didn't have safe places to live, and we had to live on the edges and slopes of mountains.

- Rohingya community leader, woman, Bhasan Char, Bangladesh

As a result of insufficient space in the camp, many families had to build their shelters in risky spaces where there are risks of flooding or landslide or where there is no vegetation. Consequently, it's fatal for them when a serious landslide or flood occurs. Many people have already been killed by serious landslides in many parts of the camps. Small children have died due to serious flooding.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Humanitarian actors have highlighted the significant financial implications of restrictions on shelter materials for the sector. In the seven years since the 2017 expansion of the refugee settlements, many Rohingya refugees - with the support of humanitarian organisations - have been forced to repair or rebuild their shelters between five and 10 times due to environmental hazards. This not only strains humanitarian budgets, but also exerts pressure on the local environment, due to the persistent demand for bamboo. Advocacy efforts urging government permission to 'build back better' using weather-resistant materials have so far yielded limited success. Transitioning to more durable structures capable of withstanding environmental impacts would not only protect Rohingya communities, but also yield 'potentially massive savings', mitigating the counterproductive and wasteful use of natural resources and reducing reliance on dwindling humanitarian funding.¹¹² On Bhasan Char, while shelters are constructed from more durable material such as concrete compared to those in Cox's Bazar camps, the corrugated iron roofing material reportedly causes shelters to overheat, with one interviewee referring to it as being 'like you are in an oven.'

2.2.2.2 Health, sanitation, food and water security

Overcrowded camps increase the risk of disease transmission, exacerbated by poor sanitation systems and drainage. MSF has called the climate crisis a 'health crisis' impacting on vector-borne, food-borne and water-borne diseases, which "are projected to increase as the climate crisis accelerates."¹¹³ Survey respondents and key informants have drawn links between climate impacts and health and sanitation concerns, citing health issues arising from extreme heat, the spread of contagious and seasonal disease due to adverse weather conditions in congested camps, and environmental and health hazards stemming from flooding, landslides, water shortages, and ineffective drainage systems.

¹¹² Norwegian Refugee Council (2023) [5 things you should know about shelters for refugees in Bangladesh](#)

¹¹³ MSF (2023) [Asia-Pacific: The Climate Crisis is a Health Crisis](#)

Whenever I communicate with family and friends in Bangladesh, I hear our people are suffering from extreme hot weather and eventually getting different health problems in the camp of Bangladesh. I heard that skin diseases have become very common in the camp, and almost every single Rohingya has skin diseases and itching problems.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Because of poor infrastructure and a lack of proper waste management, random changes in weather patterns cause different diseases such as flu and skin diseases.... If a member in a household gets a contagious disease, all other members of that household are highly at risk of getting infected too because the shelter is too small and they can't maintain any distance from the infected one.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Now the weather is cool and we are getting sick frequently... The camp is too congested and is an unhealthy place for us. I clean the surrounding area around my shelter as we are getting sick from it. People are getting different types of diseases in the camp due to the unclean environment which we didn't see in Myanmar.

- 57-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Climate impacts also extend to food and water security, with delays in food assistance due to cyclones and climate-related damage to crops leading to supply shortages and increased prices among Rohingya communities. Some Rohingya reported selling their food rations in order to buy blankets and warm clothes to cope with extreme cold temperatures. On Bhasan Char, cyclone damage to vegetable farms was reported; and extreme weather conditions prevented people from fishing at sea, further exacerbating food insecurity. Further, agricultural programmes on the island faced challenges due to the lack of arable land caused by soil salinification, making productive harvests difficult. Moreover, a humanitarian actor also drew links between climate change and **water security**, citing the likelihood of saline intrusion into drinking water supplies, and foreshadowing the need for more desalination capacity to prevent a future 'drinking water crisis.' The interplay between environmental degradation, inadequate shelter, health hazards, and food and water insecurity create a precarious living environment for Rohingya refugees. As these challenges intensify in the face of climate change, migration may increasingly be seen as a viable option for those seeking safer and more sustainable living conditions.

When it's cold, we sell some of our food rations so that we can buy some blankets and warm clothes.

- 48-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

There are no proper water supply systems. We need to go long distances to get fresh water. We store water in clay pots or covered containers for cooling during the hot season.

- 46-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Because of the climate change impacts on agriculture, the prices of daily consumer goods get higher which affects us negatively in terms of daily life.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Delhi, India

Box 2: Community-based adaptation mechanism

Findings from the household surveys showed various initiatives taken by the Rohingya community to respond to the climate and environmental impacts on their shelter. For instance, sandbags were used to strengthen the shelter especially during monsoon seasons.

We try to keep our personal safety by draining the inside of our shelter and putting sandbags above the roofs so that the wind won't blow the roofs off.

- 35-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

We put some sandbags on our shelter, but the roof was tarpaulin and blew away in the strong wind.

- 59-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Measures taken to protect their shelter from heavy rainfalls and extreme heat also demonstrated community-based innovation:

My shelter is located on a slope of a hill. When it rains heavily, water flows across it. I make a dam around it to prevent water from entering into it... I grew a home garden supported by the shelter roof. As a result of that, we have greens around us. The bean vines and other plants keep the shelter cool.

- 48-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

“

I put extra sand on my floor to make it higher than ground level and I installed low brick walls around my shelter so that the water can't flow through my shelter when there is heavy rainfall or flooding.

- 43-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

“

We should be given some plants to plant beside the shelter to decrease the soil erosion and risk of landslides.

- 55-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

”

Survey responses indicated a need to support such community-based efforts, and highlighted gaps in terms of disaster preparedness and support from the humanitarian actors.

“

In the last monsoon, a landslide happened near my shelter, and my shelter was partially damaged.... I requested them to build concrete walls on the hill slope to prevent further landslides, but they built it with bamboo. I also requested them to help rebuild my shelter, but they didn't. They only gave me a shelter kit, and I had to build my shelter by myself.

- 39-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

”

”

2.2.2.3 Livelihoods

Environmental factors contribute to Rohingya mobility indirectly through its impacts on their livelihoods. According to the household surveys conducted in Cox's Bazar, the lack of livelihood opportunities was the second most cited driver for leaving Bangladesh (see Figure 2). Similarly, among respondents in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, economic reasons were the fourth most reported driver for leaving Bangladesh (see Figure 3). Under the encampment policy in Bangladesh, nearly all respondents (96%) reported being reliant on external support in the camps. This support encompassed aid from humanitarian organisations such as food rations and essential items (such as gas and soap). Additionally, some respondents received remittances from family members residing in countries like Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. However, this assistance often falls short, especially with the reduction in food rations since 2023.¹¹⁴

Despite restrictions on formal employment in Bangladesh, 66% of respondents reported household members engaging in paid work to complement the inadequate humanitarian support. These roles typically took the form of voluntary or informal positions such as volunteers, manual labourers, small business owners, farmers and fishermen within the camp, resulting in unstable and irregular income. The challenging of accessing adequate livelihoods is compounded by environmental factors as illustrated below. The impacts of environmental factors are particularly prevalent among daily wage workers.

¹¹⁴ Due to funding shortfalls, the food ration was reduced from USD12 to USD8 in 2023 and later was increased to USD10 in 2024, which still falls below the targeted USD 12.5. Ganguly, S. & Paul, Ruma (2024) [U.N. to boost food ration for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh](#)

Some daily labour workers can't go to work due to extreme hot weather... due to heavy precipitation, floods occur which hinders farmers from cultivating the land... many of us can't afford proper warm clothes, and people who need to go to daily labour work in the early morning suffer from the extreme cold.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The extreme weather particularly impacts on labour worker dependent on daily wage. If they can't go to work, they can't earn their income which eventually affects their ability to afford daily needs for their families. The climate change doesn't only effect people physically, but also socially and psychologically. The climate change can also cause rises in the prices of our daily consumer goods.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The lack of livelihood also has an impact on the escalating insecurity and violence within the camps, which was the most cited driver for movement out of Bangladesh, further underscoring the role of environmental factors as a 'threat multiplier'. As illustrated below, instances of Rohingya being forced to engage in illegal activities have risen due to the dearth of alternative livelihood opportunities, contributing to the heightened gang violence and criminal activities in the camp.

The camp was peaceful for some time following our arrival [in 2017]. Our people found some livelihood opportunities in the camp by themselves and could make their living stably for some time. At the end of 2019, the government authorities of Bangladesh have banned all those livelihood opportunities and declared that Rohingya refugees aren't allowed to have any occupation in the camp. Consequently, many people have involved in illegal activities such as gangs and drug dealings. Because of these gangs and criminal activities, ordinary and innocent ones feel insecure to live in the camp.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

The livelihood opportunities have also been banned and restricted. Consequently, conflicts and fights have become common among us. Many gangs of bad people have appeared in the camps... Our people have been going through hardships with livelihoods due to reduction of the humanitarian food assistance [in 2023] and lack of livelihood opportunities in the camp. In consequence to unbearable hardships, different forms of crimes and illegal activities have been appearing. The state of statelessness and hardships are forcing them to involve in wrongdoings.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

When I was in the camp of Bangladesh, I became a victim of a gang twice. I was kidnapped by them twice, and I had to pay ransom to get released. Because of the protection risks there, I was forced to choose irregular migration and come to Indonesia with my whole family.

- Rohingya humanitarian worker in Aceh, Indonesia

Conversely, the lack of livelihoods also impacts survey respondents' **resilience and ability to cope with climate impacts**, demonstrating the multidirectional and compounding links between environmental factors and other challenges faced by Rohingya refugees, which may indirectly influence migration decisions.

I am suffering lots of problems with livelihoods as I don't have anyone to make any income. As a widowed woman I have to face many challenges. I don't see a good solution to solve it. I don't have enough warm clothes for me and for my son.

- 41-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

I am vulnerable as I don't have any income. I need NGO help to build concrete walls around the slope of the hill where I am living, and stronger shelter.

- 39-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

We face many disasters during the rainy season but we did not get any support from NGOs. We don't have any income like we did in Myanmar, and it is difficult to deal with everything by ourselves.

- 39-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Our shelter is too weak and frequently damaged by natural disasters, especially landslides. We are not getting enough support from anyone to manage this. It is difficult to manage by ourselves since we don't have any income source here. We need more humanitarian support.

- 58-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

2.3 Climate change and intersectional vulnerabilities

The findings from household surveys and key informant interviews underscore the distinct gendered impacts of climate-related events within Bangladesh, revealing the potential exacerbation of existing intersectional vulnerabilities and consequent implications for mobility. For instance, within the camps, entrenched cultural norms and security considerations confine Rohingya women to their shelters,¹¹⁵ limiting the coping mechanisms available to them and rendering them disproportionately susceptible to extreme heat.

Whenever we feel extremely warm we go out of our shelter to get natural fresh air but our women and girls don't have that opportunity. The women and girls have to suffer a lot inside the small and hot shelter.

- 28-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

During the hot season, we use folding fans to avoid the heat. I cannot afford solar or an electrical fan, and I cannot go out of the shelter to get fresh air. If I go outside, male outsiders can see me which will be sinful for me.

- 48-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Elderly people and pregnant women can be affected more by a climate change. The extremely hot weather can cause cholera. If a pregnant woman has gotten cholera, she can be in a fatal condition.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Furthermore, during and after disaster events, Rohingya women and girls face heightened exposure to gender-based violence due to inadequate shelter and sanitation facilities, amplifying protection risks.¹¹⁶ For example, when shelters are destroyed by cyclones, families are rendered homeless, and women and girls do not have a private space to change sanitary pads, which can have follow-on effects on girls' attendance at education centres.

When any disaster occurs randomly, our women have to leave shelters and run without wearing burqas and scarves. When a woman is seen by other men without a burqa, it's a loss of social dignity for her. She feels harassed.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

¹¹⁵ Oxfam, [Breaking barriers for Rohingya refugee women](#)

¹¹⁶ Danish Refugee Council and Stockholm Environment Institute (2022) [Exploring the Environment-Conflict-Migration Nexus in Asia, Asia Climate Framework - Research Report](#) p2; Protection Sector (Quarter 4 2023) [Joint Protection Monitoring Report](#); Norwegian Refugee Council (2023) [5 things you should know about shelters for refugees in Bangladesh](#)

Female-headed households, widowed, single or unaccompanied women face even greater protection challenges, as they may have less ability to access livelihood opportunities, may have sole caring responsibilities, and may be at heightened risk of exploitation and gender-based violence. The research findings underscore the need for gender-responsive and intersectional approaches in disaster response and climate resilience strategies, to ensure inclusive protection of marginalised populations.



I am a widow and I don't have anyone to make an income. I don't get enough rations. I am suffering a lot. I sometimes beg from people in order to get some support.

- 53-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



Photo credit: Sina Hasan/ DRC Bangladesh

3 GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS AND COMPARATIVE APPROACHES

Significant progress has been made in recent years in developing global instruments and policy guidance to address climate-related migration and displacement. For States and regional bodies in South and Southeast Asia, these emerging models and approaches provide a foundation for developing stronger national and regional frameworks to address climate mobility.

The Nansen Initiative was launched in 2012 as a State-led consultative process to build consensus on the key principles and elements to address the protection and assistance needs of persons displaced across borders in the context of disasters, including the adverse effects of climate change.¹¹⁷ Following these consultations, 109 countries – including Bangladesh and all ASEAN focused countries except Malaysia – endorsed the 2015 **Nansen Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change (the Protection Agenda)**.¹¹⁸ The Protection Agenda conceptualises, compiles effective practices, and identifies priority areas for enhanced action to address the protection needs of cross-border disaster-displaced persons and manage disaster displacement risks in the country of origin.

The **Global Compact for Migration (GCM)** includes non-binding commitments for States to promote safe and legal pathways for people affected by slow and sudden-onset disasters and climate change as well as promoting sustainable outcomes that increase resilience and self-reliance.¹¹⁹ Climate-related displacement received limited attention at the 2021 Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the GCM, with ‘only two references to the role of climate change in contributing to displacement in the region, and no reported discussion of legal pathways or other mechanisms for addressing the phenomenon in either its internal or cross-border dimension.’¹²⁰ The second Asia-Pacific Regional Review of Implementation of the GCM is due to take place in 2025 and is an opportunity to revisit and discuss opportunities for promoting effective implementation of climate mobility frameworks.

The **Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)** identifies climate impacts and disasters as factors that intertwine with drivers of refugee movements (para. 8) and calls for support for measures to address protection and humanitarian challenges, including in relation to disaster displaced persons (para. 63).¹²¹ The December 2023 **Global Refugee Forum (GRF)** facilitated pledges in support of burden- and responsibility-sharing under the GCR, including the:

- **Multistakeholder Pledge: Climate Action** - which aims to ensure that by 2027, ‘hosting developing countries and communities in climate-vulnerable, fragile, and conflict-affected settings receive improved access to climate action, including capacity-building and financing’ and that ‘refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people living in these settings receive comparable support for climate action as nationals, through their inclusion in all relevant laws, policies, plans and programming.’¹²²
- **Multistakeholder Pledge: Rohingya Refugees - Expanded Resilience, Enhanced Solutions** - which aims to ‘ease pressure on host countries through enhancing resilience and expanding solutions for Rohingya refugees...’ and create ‘opportunities for stakeholders to leverage their collective strengths to advance resilience through supporting self-reliance initiatives, access to education and climate action, and to expand solutions by supporting the creation of conditions for sustainable return and third country solutions, such as resettlement or complementary pathways.’ The multistakeholder pledge comprises 42 pledges from a range of stakeholders including the United Nations, donors,

¹¹⁷ McAdam, J. (2013) [Creating New Norms? The Nansen Initiative on Disaster-Induced Cross-Border Displacement](#) Brookings

¹¹⁸ The Nansen Initiative (2015) [Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change](#)

¹¹⁹ UN General Assembly (2018) [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#)

¹²⁰ Matthew, S. (2023) [Yearbook of International Disaster Law Online, 4\(1\), 616-629](#)

¹²¹ UN General Assembly (2018) [Global Compact on Refugees](#)

¹²² Global Compact on Refugees (2023) [Multistakeholder Pledge: Climate Action](#)

governments, civil society and the private sector, on topics including access to health and education, portable skills and ‘green jobs’ development, expanded third country pathways,¹²³ increased climate resilience *in situ* and locally-led climate adaptation.¹²⁴

UNHCR’s 2014 **Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements** provides guidance to governments in the development of Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements (TPSAs) as responses to humanitarian crises and complex or mixed population movements, particularly in situations where existing responses are not suited or adequate. TPSAs are described as non-political and humanitarian, and are intended to be flexible to react quickly to a disaster, while ensuring a minimum level of protection.¹²⁵ The non-binding **Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement** cover internally displaced persons (IDPs), including those displaced by ‘natural or human-made disasters.’¹²⁶

In addition to the aforementioned global instruments and policy guidance, significant progress has also been made in the development of national, regional or sub regional approaches to cross border displacement driven by climate change in other parts of the world. These include:

- The **Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility** was endorsed at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders’ Meeting in November 2023. The framework is intended to guide governments in addressing legal, policy and practical issues arising from climate mobility in its various forms, which includes staying in place, displacement, migration, planned relocation and stranded migrants.¹²⁷
- The **Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union treaty** was announced in November 2023. It is the world’s first bilateral agreement on climate mobility and will provide migration pathways to Australia for up to 280 Tuvaluans annually who are facing the existential threat of climate change.¹²⁸ While the agreement has been lauded as ground breaking, it has also faced criticism for being ‘neo-colonial’ due to requirements under the agreement that Tuvalu not enter into any security or defence agreements with other countries without Australian approval.¹²⁹
- In Eastern Africa, **Article 16 of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in the IGAD Region**,¹³⁰ adopted in 2021 explicitly provides that disaster-affected people may enter and stay in the territory of another Member State (Article 16). Free movement agreements at the regional and sub-regional levels would be of particular interest for the ASEAN region, considering the ongoing project of economic integration.¹³¹
- The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Free Movement Protocol** allows individuals and families to find refuge and employment in neighbouring countries during times of drought and flooding.¹³²
- In Africa, **Article 1(2) of the OAU Convention** defines ‘refugee’ as including persons who are compelled to leave their place of habitual residence and seek refuge in another country on the basis of ‘events seriously disturbing public order’ (which may include events where the adverse effects of climate change or disasters are a contributing factor) in either part or the whole of their country of origin or nationality.¹³³
- The 2022 **Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change** outlines concerns on the effects of climate change on human mobility and outlines priorities for enhanced regional cooperation.¹³⁴

¹²³ Pledges Included commitments to expanded resettlement pathways to the USA and Australia; a commitment from the USA as chair of the Resettlement Diplomacy Network and co-chair of the Priority Situations Core Group, to encourage other countries to expand or create new third-country solutions for Rohingya; and a commitment from BRAC to provide training in transferable and adaptable skills that cater to the labour market demands in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and/or other countries, to support complementary pathways and skilled labour migration.

¹²⁴ Global Compact on Refugees (2023) [Multistakeholder Pledge: Rohingya Refugees - Expanded Resilience, Enhanced Solutions](#)

¹²⁵ UNHCR (2014) [Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements](#)

¹²⁶ UN Commission on Human Rights (1998) Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis M. Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission resolution 1997/39, [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2](#)

¹²⁷ IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2023) [Pacific Islands Countries Lauded for Endorsing Regional Framework on Climate Mobility](#)

¹²⁸ McAdam, J. (2023) [Australia’s offer of climate migration to Tuvalu residents is groundbreaking - and could be a lifeline across the Pacific](#)

¹²⁹ Su, Y. (2024) [The Australia-Tuvalu deal shows why we need a global framework for climate relocations](#) The Conversation

¹³⁰ The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a body of eight member states: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda.

¹³¹ Alexandra B. & Walter K. (2022) [Climate crisis and displacement – from commitment to action](#) Forced Migration Review 69

¹³² UNHCR & Platform on Disaster Displacement (2023) [Policy Brief: Protection of Persons Displaced Across Borders in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change](#)

¹³³ Organization of African Unity (OAU) (1969) [Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa \("OAU Convention"\), 1001 U.N.T.S. 45](#); Also see: UNHCR (2023) [Assessing serious disturbances to public order under the 1969 OAU Convention, including in the context of disasters, environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change](#)

¹³⁴ UNFCCC (2022) [Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change](#)

- Subregional **free movement agreements in the Caribbean**, under the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), have been used to grant protection to Caribbean nationals displaced by hurricanes.¹³⁵
- In Latin America, **Article III(3) of the Cartagena Declaration** expands the refugee definition to include persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by ‘circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order’ which may include disasters and climate-related events.¹³⁶
- **Argentina’s Special Humanitarian Visa Program** for nationals and residents in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean displaced by socio-natural disasters. Launched in May 2022, the programme grants admission under a temporary visa based on humanitarian grounds for up to three years, with possibilities to transition to permanent residency.¹³⁷
- **Italy’s immigration law** allows for policy authorities to issue ‘renewable short-term residency permits to foreigners whose country of origin is in a situation of “contingent and exceptional calamity” that does not allow for safe return.’ The Italian Supreme Court of Cassation has ‘recognised that recurrent flooding and riverbank erosion in Bangladesh’ gave rise to the requisite disaster conditions making safe return impossible.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Francis, A. (2019) [Free Movement Agreements & Climate-Induced Migration: A Caribbean Case Study](#), Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, Columbia Law School

¹³⁶ [Cartagena Declaration on Refugees](#), Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama (1984); Refugees International (2021) [Can regional refugee definitions help protect people displaced by climate change in Latin America?](#)

¹³⁷ Ministerio del Interior de Argentina/Migraciones / Platform on Disaster Displacement, [Policy Brief: Leading Initiatives by Argentina to Address Displacement in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change](#).

¹³⁸ UNHCR / Platform on Disaster Displacement (2023) [Policy Brief: Protection of Persons Displaced Across Borders in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change](#).



4 REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Climate and environmental issues have increasingly been receiving attention from regional bodies in South and Southeast Asia as an important area of focus and transnational cooperation. However, there has been very little focus on addressing climate mobility at the regional level, and there remains a significant need for developing regional cooperation mechanisms and capacity to respond to climate-induced displacement.

4.1 ASEAN

ASEAN has gradually strengthened its engagement on climate change and environmental issues. Since 2009, the **ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC)** has operated as a consultative and collaborative platform to enhance regional cooperation and action to address the adverse impacts of climate change. The AWGCC is working towards the implementation of AWGCC Action Plan 2019-2025 and has led the production of the ASEAN State of Climate Change Report (ASCCR) which provides an overall outlook of the state of play of climate change issues in the ASEAN region. Under the leadership of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment (AMME), the **ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN)** have been working towards implementing regional policies, measures and programmes to promote environmental protection and sustainable development. ASEAN has also outlined key strategic measures towards transitioning to a more climate-resilient region in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASSC) Blueprint 2025. In addition to efforts to promote policy coherence and regional collaboration around climate change issues, ASEAN established in 2023 the **ASEAN Centre for Climate Change** as an intergovernmental centre for climate change coordination and cooperation among ASEAN Member States.

In recognition of the region's geographic vulnerability and exposure to more frequent and severe disasters, ASEAN has identified "climate-related security risks as a direct challenge to [its] mandate to promote prosperity and stability in the South East Asian region."¹³⁹ In response, ASEAN has advanced "substantial implementation efforts related to disaster management."¹⁴⁰ The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), a legally binding regional agreement, was signed in 2005 and ratified in 2009 to support regional cooperation in the field of disaster management and response. In 2009, the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief Fund was established and in 2011, the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) was established as the main regional coordinating centre. In 2016, ASEAN leaders adopted the ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response, which affirms the AADMER as the main regional policy and common platform, and the AHA Centre as the primary regional coordinating body, while calling for further coordination, harmonisation and streamlining of ASEAN disaster response mechanisms.¹⁴¹

At the national level, all Southeast Asian countries are committed to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement¹⁴² and all have developed institutional frameworks for addressing climate change, including national adaptation plans in most cases. However, reflecting a global trend,¹⁴³ mobility and durable solutions for climate displacement are generally not well-integrated – or even included – in national plans and there has been very little focus on mobility and displacement at the regional level. The Asian Development Bank has stated, "most of the adaptation mechanisms currently being canvassed [in the region] are designed to keep people in place and promote an alternative to migration," pointing to *in situ* adaptation measures as the most common response.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Krampe, F. et al (2018) [Responses to Climate-related Security Risks: Regional Organizations in Asia and Africa](#) SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2018/2 August 2018

¹⁴⁰ Krampe, F. et al (2018) [Responses to Climate-related Security Risks: Regional Organizations in Asia and Africa](#) SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2018/2 August 2018

¹⁴¹ ASEAN (2016) [ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response](#)

¹⁴² Seah, S. and Melinda Martinus, M. (2021) [Gaps and Opportunities in ASEAN's Climate Governance](#), Trends in Southeast Asia, Issue 5, Yusof Ishak Institute

¹⁴³ See: Mixed Migration Centre (2022) [Stories of climate mobility: understanding the impacts, informing effective response](#)

¹⁴⁴ Asian Development Bank (2012) [Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific](#)

There have, however, been references to the mobility dimensions of climate change in several relevant ASEAN documents and policies. The ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of the Child in the Context of Migration notes the displacement of children by climate change and environmental degradation and sets out a right to ‘a clean and safe environment’ in the context of migration. The ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management (Vision 2025) recognised the temporary displacement of 191 million people between 2004 to 2014 due to climate-related disasters, and the concurrent economic loss to the region. In the ASEAN State of Climate Change Report (ASCCR), one of the recommendations identified is to “conduct thorough transboundary climate risk assessments in areas of...human mobility.” The 2022 ASEAN Migration Outlook also notes that environmental factors may “drive future intra-ASEAN migration” and states that, “it is possible climate change can influence migration from [ASEAN Member States high in exposure and vulnerability to extreme weather events] to other less vulnerable ASEAN Member States.”

There is a need for ASEAN to “upscale efforts to advance proactive and forward-looking responses to the human mobility dimensions of climate and environmental change.”¹⁴⁵ In a welcome development towards addressing these challenges, the second edition of the **ASEAN Migration Outlook**, to be published in 2024,¹⁴⁶ will examine the climate-migration nexus in ASEAN, including cross-cutting priorities of gender, human security, and migrant protection. While the focus of the Outlook is primarily on labour migration, the start of a regional dialogue on this issue is an important step towards developing a comprehensive regional approach to climate mobility that integrates migrants into national and regional climate mobility policies and frameworks.

4.2 SAARC

Despite the South Asia subregion hosting several very large and protracted refugee populations, there is no regional refugee protection framework in South Asia. SAARC member states have been responding to cross-border displacement via ad hoc and temporary arrangements, without any consistent adherence to global human rights or refugee protection standards.¹⁴⁷ Due to its history of intra-regional conflict, particularly between India and Pakistan, multilateral cooperation and South Asian regionalism has been constrained.¹⁴⁸ SAARC members have preferred to deal with ‘contentious’ issues such as cross-border migration and displacement bilaterally, or trilaterally when UNHCR is also involved. SAARC has been ineffective at coordinating any regional approach to cross-border displacement and has been criticised for being largely inactive and ‘paralysed’ as a regional bloc.¹⁴⁹

Several mechanisms under SAARC present possible opportunities in the context of climate-related displacement, including the 2011 SAARC Agreement on Rapid Response to Natural Disasters (SARRND), the SAARC Disaster Management Centre, the SAARC food security reserve, and the Dhaka Declaration on Climate Change.¹⁵⁰ However, these initiatives “lack human and financial resources” and therefore have not been able to generate meaningful cooperation.¹⁵¹ The SARRND does not address the disaster-displacement nexus, and IOM has highlighted “the need for a bilateral and regional cooperation mechanism for people fleeing climate change and environmental disasters in the region.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ Arriola (2023) ['Acting Now for Tomorrow: Addressing Climate Mobility Challenges in Southeast Asia'](#)

¹⁴⁶ UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures (2023) [Exploring the climate change and migration nexus in Southeast Asia](#)

¹⁴⁷ Ahmad, Nafees (2019) [Options for Protecting Refugees in South Asia](#)

¹⁴⁸ Ahmed, Z. S. (2019). [Managing the refugee crises in South Asia: The role of SAARC](#). Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 28(2), 210-219

¹⁴⁹ Kugelman, M. (2020) [Climate-Induced Displacement: South Asia's Clear and Present Danger](#) The Wilson Centre

¹⁵⁰ IOM (2016) [Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia](#)

¹⁵¹ Ahmed, Z. S. (2019) [Managing the refugee crises in South Asia: The role of SAARC](#) Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 2019, 28(2), 210-219

¹⁵² Vaidyanath, P., & Bhardwaj, C. (2023) [SAARC Regional Disaster Law: Need for Progressive Development](#). *Yearbook of International Disaster Law Online*, 4(1), 123-151

4.3 Regional entry points

Humanitarian actors in South and Southeast Asia were not optimistic about the likelihood of states in the region developing a new protection framework for climate-related cross-border displacement. However, several potential entry points for developing more coordinated regional responses to internal and cross-border climate mobility were identified.

Since 2016, the **Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)** has been a State-led multistakeholder platform working to implement the recommendations of the Protection Agenda. The Protection Agenda does not call for a new binding international agreement on cross border displacement, but rather, ‘supports an approach that focuses on the integration of effective practices by States and regional organisations into their own normative frameworks in accordance with their specific situations and challenges.’¹⁵³ Bangladesh has played a prominent role with PDD, serving as Chair from 2018-2019 and currently remains a member of the PDD steering group. Bangladesh is also one of the implementation countries of the ‘Project to Avert, Minimise and Address Disaster Displacement’ (PAMAD), an initiative which provides pilot countries with support to enhance national and local preparedness in response to climate mobility, integrate climate change-related human mobility challenges into pilot countries’ national development planning processes, and technical guidance on access to funding and innovative financing mechanisms to address climate change-related human mobility challenges.

To date, there has been very limited regional-level action by PDD in South and Southeast Asia, and Asia is not currently mentioned in any specific items of the PDD’s current and upcoming workplans.¹⁵⁴ However, given Bangladesh’s position within the PDD and the endorsement of the Protection by Agenda by all ASEAN countries except Malaysia, there is significant scope for greater ASEAN engagement with the Platform on Disaster Displacement. As a follow up to PAMAD, the PDD should explore opportunities to engage and collaborate with ASEAN to develop regional and multilateral instruments to provide protection for those at risk of cross-border displacement, building on the lessons learned and progress that has been made in developing regional or sub regional approaches to cross border displacement in other countries around the globe.

Another potential avenue for advancing regional responses to climate mobility is the **Asia Pacific Disaster Displacement Working Group (AP DDWG)** led by IOM and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Formed in 2019, the AP DDWG reports to the Issue Based Coalition (IBC) on Building Resilience in the UN regional coordination platform includes over 50 members, including UN, NGOs, multilaterals, academics and other inter-governmental and coordination entities and networks, Since 2019, activities have included publishing a report on reducing the risk of protracted recurrent displacement,¹⁵⁵ raising awareness and addressing disaster displacement in DRR policy and practice¹⁵⁶ and holding a 2023 workshop to strengthen disaster response to climate-induced displacement.¹⁵⁷ The AP DDWG should continue to work towards developing more harmonised and protection-driven regional disaster frameworks, ensuring adequate attention is paid to climate-related cross-border disaster displacement in the context of both slow and rapid-onset climate events.

In addition, and as a complement to the development of regional cross-border displacement frameworks, governments in South and Southeast Asia should explore the creation of bilateral frameworks which could potentially offer protection pathways, entry and stay, and temporary humanitarian protection to migrants in vulnerable situations and at particular risk of climate induced displacement. Previous good practices, such as the issuance by Malaysia of IMM13 permits to 30,000 Acehese following the 2004 tsunami, enabling them to temporarily stay and work in the country, should be built upon as a foundation for the creation of bilateral agreements between countries in the region.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Scott, M. (2019) ‘Climate Refugees and the 1951 Convention’ in Satvinder Singh Juss (ed), *Research Handbook on International Refugee Law* (Edward Elgar, 2019) 343, 351-352

¹⁵⁴ Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Strategy 2019-2023: Annex I: Workplan*

¹⁵⁵ ODI (2020) [Reducing the risk of protracted and multiple disaster displacements in Asia-Pacific](#)

¹⁵⁶ NRC, PDD, UNDRR et al (2020) [Addressing Disaster Displacement in Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and Practice: A Checklist](#)

¹⁵⁷ IOM (2023) [IOM and UNDRR Hold Workshop to Strengthen Disaster Response to Climate-induced Displacement](#)

¹⁵⁸ Lego, J. (2012) [Protecting and Assisting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Malaysia: the role of the UNHCR, informal mechanisms, and the 'Humanitarian exception'](#); Munir-Asen, K. (2018) [\(Re\)negotiating Refugee Protection in Malaysia](#)



5 BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE RESPONSES

The future for Rohingya refugees seems bleak, painted even darker by the brushstrokes of climate change and the conditions in Arakan State and in Bangladesh. Whether they dream of returning to Myanmar, building a new life in Bangladesh, or finding a safe haven elsewhere, the odds are stacked against them... The international community must find a sustainable solution for Rohingya refugees.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The findings suggest that while climate and environmental factors do not significantly influence the cross-border movement of Rohingya, they play a role in compounding the existing vulnerabilities within Bangladesh, in relation to other drivers of movement. As climate change impacts intensify, it becomes imperative for regional and local humanitarian actors to contemplate how these environmental shifts might affect the attainment of durable solutions—namely voluntary return, local integration, or third-country pathways—for Rohingya refugees. While many stakeholders acknowledge some correlations between climate change and durable solutions, it is generally agreed that climate change does not currently serve as a barrier to achieving these outcomes. Rohingya key informants across Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand echo this sentiment, noting the existence of connections between climate change and durable solutions while affirming that climate change itself does not impede any potential resolutions. Despite expressing hopes for repatriation to Myanmar (89% of respondents expressed a wish to voluntarily return to Myanmar if the political situation changed and it was safe to do so), the likelihood of this occurring in the short to medium term is minimal. UNHCR indicated in March 2023 that conditions in Rakhine State were not suitable for the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees.¹⁵⁹ Renewed violence between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army in Rakhine State since January 2024 has led to civilian casualties and further displacement of over 100,000 Rohingya within Myanmar.¹⁶⁰

There is a lot of internal displacement in Asia, but we are not seeing cross-border displacement related to climate change yet. I don't think it would be easily disaggregated in any case. We would not necessarily seek to tease out and disaggregate climate as a specific risk. Theoretically, climate change is a risk multiplier and can add to drivers of displacement. However, in the case of the Rohingya displacement, it is important not to downplay the very serious root causes in Myanmar.

- Regional humanitarian actor

While climate change impacts add another layer of risk to the polycrisis faced by Rohingya, the root cause of their displacement and ongoing inability to safely return will not be addressed without international support, accountability, and significant political action. The Bangladeshi government continue to press for the repatriation of Rohingya as the only durable solution.¹⁶¹ However, it is important to consider climate change

¹⁵⁹ UNHCR (2023) [UNHCR statement on Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral pilot project on Rohingya returns](#)

¹⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch (2024) [Myanmar: Rohingya at Risk in Rakhine Fighting](#)

¹⁶¹ Sakib, SM N. (2023) [Bangladesh's premier reiterates call for Rohingya repatriation](#)

as a factor in any assessment of future voluntary return options for refugees. For example, questions arise about the viability of returning to a land from which many had fled years ago in the face of changing environmental conditions. The attempted repatriation in 2021 failed due to Cyclone Hamoon and the military takeover in February 2021, underscoring the immediate impact of environmental and political upheaval on repatriation efforts.¹⁶² UN experts have warned that ‘the military coup in Myanmar has not only caused a human rights and humanitarian crisis, it has also increased the climate vulnerability of the people of Myanmar’ through unregulated exploitation of the country’s natural resources and reduction of local response and adaptation capacities due to the ongoing violence.¹⁶³ Furthermore, as demonstrated by the devastating consequences of the obstruction of aid delivery to Rakhine State in the wake of Cyclone Mocha in 2023, climate-related harm can have disproportionately negative impacts for Rohingya communities facing multiple layers of vulnerability and risk.

Local integration within Bangladesh is deemed unrealistic by the majority of Rohingya respondents, leading them to identify third-country pathways as the sole viable solution at present. Nevertheless, there is acknowledgment that even with the necessary political will, implementing third-country solutions will require time. Key informants emphasised the importance of enhancing conditions—such as security, education, and livelihood opportunities—in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char to ensure a safe and dignified existence for Rohingya in Bangladesh while awaiting a more permanent resolution.

Though these areas weren't inhabitable or suitable to reside in, we decided to stay in these conditions with the hope of being able to return to Myanmar soon. Though the camp's infrastructure is not suitable, we didn't worry about it very much at first. We didn't expect that we would have to stay for such a long time. We have been here for the past seven years.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh

5.1 Safe third country pathways

Our people don't choose irregular migration happily, but they are being forced to choose it.... Though the journey to Indonesia or Malaysia is suicidal by water, our people are still choosing it because they don't have other options for migration.... If a safe pathway is ensured and accessible for them, they won't choose other routes that are illegal or dangerous.

- Rohingya community leader, woman, Bhasan Char, Bangladesh

As part of a comprehensive approach to support persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change, measures to ensure adaptation and resilience in situ need to be complemented by facilitating access to safe migration pathways. The recently launched Kaldor Principles on Climate Mobility calls for support for communities who wish to stay, protection for people who are displaced, facilitation of evacuations and relocations where necessary, and ‘migration with dignity’ for those who wish to move. As set out in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report,¹⁶⁴ ‘people's adaptive capacity is enhanced when they are supported with options to move in a safe and dignified manner.’¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Palma, P. & Molla, M. (2024) [Wait for Rohingya repatriation gets even longer](#)

¹⁶³ UN OHCHR (2023) [Military coup has exacerbated already severe climate risks in Myanmar: UN experts](#)

¹⁶⁴ IPCC (2023) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), Synthesis Report

¹⁶⁵ Researching Internal Displacement (2023) Loss and Damage and Displacement: Key Messages for the Road to COP 28; also see: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Platform on Disaster Displacement & International Organisation for Migration, 15 Observations on Disaster Displacement as Loss and Damage, pp. 12

Without access to safe migration pathways, irregular maritime movement from Bangladesh is likely to continue to escalate. Due to cyclones and extreme weather, these maritime journeys are becoming increasingly perilous, and a comprehensive and coordinated regional response is needed to respond to the recent escalation of irregular maritime movement.¹⁶⁶

In addition to taking immediate action to ensure protection for Rohingya at sea, the international community should work with the government of Bangladesh to expand access to third country pathways for the Rohingya. Given the ongoing instability and violence in Myanmar, and the dwindling humanitarian funding for the Cox's Bazar camp, third country pathways can play an important role as part of an expanded package of solutions for Rohingya refugees. Both Australia and the US pledged at the GRF to increase resettlement for vulnerable Rohingya refugees and there is scope to significantly expand opportunities for Rohingya to access third country pathways.

In addition to resettlement, offers of complementary pathways, including through higher education opportunities, labour mobility, family reunification and private or community sponsorship, should also be scaled up. The Philippines, has shown leadership in opening up education pathways for Rohingya scholars, demonstrating best practice and genuine regional solidarity.¹⁶⁷ This approach should be expanded to other ASEAN member states, who can play an important role in providing access to regularisation and migration pathways for Rohingya.¹⁶⁸

Portable Green Skills

In a movement that is sometimes called “greening the humanitarian response,” humanitarian actors are increasingly prioritising climate action (including mitigation and adaptation) and environmental safeguarding in displacement settings. Humanitarian actors in Bangladesh are implementing a multitude of 'greening' and adaptation initiatives to promote climate change mitigation and environmental sustainability in the humanitarian response. In addition to increasing investment in climate action and environmental safeguarding, there is significant opportunity for humanitarian actors, donors, and the private sector to explore opportunities to support portable 'green' skills-building for Rohingya.

Building the capacity of Rohingya to work in climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and response, and other 'green' programmes in Cox's Bazar - such as energy, infrastructure, water, and reforestation - could build transferable and in-demand skills. Globally, jobs requiring green skills are growing at double the rate of the workers equipped for them.¹⁷⁰ Investing from the private sector in education and green skills development for Rohingya could significantly expand the talent pool available for sectors experiencing skills shortages. Not only would this strengthen resilience, adaptation and livelihoods *in situ*, but it would also help unlock the untapped potential of labour mobility pathways for Rohingya refugees. Investment and support in developing these complementary pathways would not only enable Rohingya to access safe third country pathways, but it would also contribute to the green transition in the region and further afield.

¹⁶⁶ See recommendations for the Bali Process Consultation Mechanism and Task Force on Planning and Preparedness (TFPP) relating to rapid emergency response, search and rescue, and disembarkation of Rohingya boats, in: Asia Displacement Solutions Platform, Danish Refugee Council et al (2023) [Promoting Regional Responses to Rohingya Displacement in Southeast Asia](#)

¹⁶⁷ UNHCR (2023) [2nd batch of Rohingya scholars arrive in Philippines for Complementary Pathways programme](#)

¹⁶⁸ Korobi, S. (2024) [Rohingya Resettlement: Where is ASEAN?](#) Australian Institute of International Affairs,

¹⁶⁹ See, for example: Humanitarian Advisory Group, [Greening the System - Humanitarian Advisory Group](#); Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2023) [IASC Guidance Environmental Responsibility in Humanitarian Operations](#); European Commission (2021) [Compendium of good practices for a greener humanitarian response](#); Steinke, A. (2023) [Climate change and humanitarian change: Challenging norms, mandates and practices](#)

¹⁷⁰ World Economic Forum (2024) [Green jobs grow twice as fast as workers with green skills](#)

5.2 Nexus/resilience approaches

When asked to speak on possible solutions to environmental issues in the camps, Rohingya respondents consistently framed their responses in the context of other issues they face in the camps.¹⁷¹ Environmental issues, as well as coping mechanisms and possible solutions, were presented as being interlinked and inextricable from other issues of concern:

We need repatriation or resettlement as soon as possible. We won't find any solutions if we have to keep living in the camps, which are not safe for us.

- 36-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

We need shelter, early warning systems, more humanitarian services, access to third country pathways, planned relocation and more education about these things

-30-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

The government should give the opportunity to the international community to bring Rohingya to a safe place.

- 52-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

We need access to farming land. We have to be allowed to work and do business inside and outside of the camp.

-53-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

These responses indicate reflect a prevailing perception that socioeconomic issues cannot be separated from environmental factors. Cyclones and extreme weather can impact food security. Rising temperatures and changes in weather patterns compounds health and hygiene issues, which are linked to shelter and infrastructure issues in the congested camp settings. The ability to work, and access to farming land, is linked to the ability to withstand climate-related disasters. Third-country pathways are seen as solutions to the environmental hazards Rohingya face within the camps.

To meaningfully address these environmental issues, and in the context of a changing climate, it is essential that humanitarian actors adopt longer-term approaches that strengthen resilience and address development and peacebuilding challenges. There is broad consensus in the humanitarian space that **social and economic inclusion** and **social protection** is key to promoting refugee resilience and mitigating loss

¹⁷¹ See Annexure B.

and damage from climate impacts. The Red Cross refers to ‘shock responsive social protection’¹⁷² and equitable socio-economic development as ‘a solution for reducing the potential for loss and damage’ and further argues, ‘measures to address compound risks like social safety nets ... can avoid and minimise the burden of loss and damage by limiting intersecting and secondary vulnerabilities.’¹⁷³

Support for community resilience is intrinsically linked to economic and social rights.¹⁷⁴ **A community like the Rohingya in Bangladesh, that is almost entirely dependent on humanitarian aid, without freedom of movement or access to livelihoods, can never be truly resilient.** Maintaining the status quo for Rohingya, confined to disaster-prone settlements, without freedom of movement or meaningful access to education and livelihoods, heightens the vulnerability of Rohingya to the impacts of climate change, and increases pressure on limited humanitarian resources.

A collective emphasis on and move towards ‘**climate-resilient development**’ would enable both refugee and host communities build resilience to respond to the compounding effects of climate change. Such an approach aims to move beyond ‘just coping with crises’ to a broader focus on resilience, wherein activity and funding by all actors – ‘working across the spectrum of humanitarian aid and disaster risk management to development and peacebuilding’ – are linked, layered and sequenced in such a way that they mutually reinforce and support each other.’¹⁷⁵ Climate mobility is a particularly apt area in which to advance nexus/resilience approaches because of the multiple policy areas the issue affects, including humanitarian assistance, sustainable development, peacebuilding, migration and refugee policies, social protection, climate finance, climate adaptation, DRR, and disaster preparedness, response and recovery.¹⁷⁶ Investing in a ‘resilience’ approach would also better prepare Rohingya to access durable solutions in the future for voluntary return or third country pathways, should they become available.

The involvement of **peace actors** and **conflict-sensitive approaches** is an especially important aspect of ‘nexus’ or ‘resilience’ approaches to mitigate against the risk of increased resentment and social tension between Rohingya and their host communities, who are both mutually exposed environmental hazards and in competition over scarce land and resources.¹⁷⁷

5.3 Climate finance

Humanitarian organisations have recognised that the existing humanitarian financing system is “ill-equipped to adequately respond to multiple and compounding climate impacts,” stating that “while communities, local and national responders; and humanitarians are at the frontlines of this crisis, the overwhelming and escalating needs far surpass their capacities to absorb and recover from shocks.”¹⁷⁸ The 2023 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya refugee response, including the Cyclone Mocha Appeal, was 47% funded as of 31 December 2023, with USD 432.3 million received against the overall appeal of USD 918.1 million.¹⁷⁹ New streams of funding are necessary to support protection and resilience of Rohingya.

¹⁷² IFRC (2022) [Where it matters most: Smart climate financing for the hardest hit people](#) p30

¹⁷³ Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (2023) [Key findings related to loss and damage from the Working Group II report of the sixth IPCC assessment of the global climate](#) p38

¹⁷⁴ UNHCR’s 2023 Regional Consultations with NGOs in Asia and the Pacific highlighted socio-economic inclusion as essential to resilience, emphasising ‘the benefits of integrating displaced populations into national systems, aiming for predictable support and promoting self-reliance, while positively contributing to host communities, particularly in key sectors such as education and health.’ See: UNHCR (2023) [UNHCR Regional Consultations with NGOs in Asia and the Pacific](#)

¹⁷⁵ ODI (2023) [Framing note: Building forward better](#)

¹⁷⁶ Researching Internal Displacement (2023) [Loss and Damage and Displacement: Key Messages for the Road to COP 28](#)

¹⁷⁷ Neef et al (2023) [The Conflict, Climate Change, and Displacement Nexus Revisited: The Protracted Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh](#) Journal of Peacebuilding & Development

¹⁷⁸ Climate Action Network International and ICVA (2023) [Joint Call for Action by Humanitarian, Climate and Development organisations to support the demand for the Loss and Damage Fund](#)

¹⁷⁹ ISCG and UNHCR (accessed 19 February 2024) [Rohingya Refugee Response, Bangladesh](#)

At COP 28 in November 2023, countries agreed to operationalise a ‘loss and damage’ fund, under the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damage and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), with the Santiago network envisioned as playing a key role in catalysing technical assistance to support the fund.¹⁸⁰ The fund is intended to provide financial assistance to nations most impacted by the unavoidable risks of climate change. Governance and capitalisation of the fund will be further considered at COP 29 in November 2024.¹⁸¹ The term ‘loss and damage’ refers to “the negative consequences of climate change on human societies and the natural environment”¹⁸² and “the harm from (observed) impact and (projected) risks which can be economic or non-economic.”¹⁸³ Non-economic loss and damage (NELD) can include loss of life, health, wellbeing, identity, sense of place, social fabric, culture, ecosystems and biodiversity.¹⁸⁴

ASEAN is developing the **ASEAN Climate Finance Strategy/Climate Finance Access and Mobilisation Strategy for ASEAN Member States**, which is intended to improve ASEAN access to climate finance and catalyse climate finance and investment for the implementation of priority mitigation and adaptation actions. The ASEAN Climate Finance Strategy is anticipated to be the primary avenue through which the Member States and their partners can increase regional access to climate funds, including for addressing the concerns of loss and damage associated with the adverse effect of climate change.¹⁸⁵

The humanitarian sector has been paying close attention to ‘loss and damage’ developments, calling for greater visibility of cross-border displacement in the discussions. The COP 28 decision to operationalise the fund “...recognises the importance of particularly vulnerable developing countries and *segments of the population that are already vulnerable* owing to geography, socioeconomic status, livelihood, gender, age, minority status, *marginalisation, displacement, or disability.*”¹⁸⁶ [*emphasis added*] Depending on how it is capitalised and governed, COP 28’s loss and damage fund has the potential to be “a crucial expression of climate justice” and provide support to both host countries affected by adverse climate change effects as well as displaced populations.¹⁸⁷ Loss and damage funding may include non-economic loss such as displacement, and therefore onward movement of Rohingya driven by climate change (particularly if maladaptive) may bring certain displacement-focussed responses within the scope of the fund.¹⁸⁸

State-centric climate finance (government to government; or multilateral bank to government), however, is unlikely to reach non-citizens effectively or adequately at risk of climate loss and damage. Reeve argues that “to better cater to the needs of communities that live in fragile and conflict affected states we need to move climate finance in these areas to a grants-based, non-state centric system... a system that can continue regardless of who is in charge, and that puts local organisations in the driving seat of responses.”¹⁸⁹ It is in this context, where questions arise as to who is accountable to the displaced population, that humanitarian actors have an important role to play, in advocating for and providing support to people who do not have a state willing or able to play that role. Gernot Laganda, climate director at the World Food Program (WFP) argues that in fragile settings, “when funds are channelled through national governments, it is too little too late to make it to the most vulnerable people.”¹⁹⁰

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development has recommended that Bangladesh undertake mapping of ‘vulnerable communities and relevant actors’ to identify target groups for loss and damage funds.¹⁹¹ This mapping must include non-nationals such as Rohingya. Climate action provides a strong impetus for promoting refugee community resilience, self-reliance and preparedness, to avoid an increasing drain on humanitarian resources as climate impacts proliferate. It is essential that the climate finance architecture recognises and addresses the needs of displaced climate-affected populations

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, Proposal by the President, Draft decision -/CP.28, FCCC/CP/2023/L.5

¹⁸¹ Lakhani, N. (2023) *\$700m pledged to loss and damage fund at Cop28 covers less than 0.2% needed* The Guardian

¹⁸² London School of Economics and Political Science (2021) *What is Climate Change ‘Loss and Damage?’*

¹⁸³ Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (2023) *Key findings related to loss and damage from the Working Group II report of the sixth IPCC assessment of the global climate*

¹⁸⁴ Rozario, S. & Madiha C. (2023) *Climate Induced Displacement in Bangladesh through the Lens of ‘Loss and Damage’* Researching Internal Displacement

¹⁸⁵ Sok, Derodofa and Saputro (2023) *‘Financing Loss and Damage from Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities’*

¹⁸⁶ UNFCCC (2023) *Outcome of the first global stocktake. Draft decision -/CMA.5. Proposal by the President FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.17 [121]-[135]*

¹⁸⁷ Worley, W. (2023) *New loss and damage fund means many things to many people* The New Humanitarian

¹⁸⁸ Researching Internal Displacement (2023) *Loss and Damage and Displacement: Key Messages for the Road to COP 28*

¹⁸⁹ Reeve, T. et al (2023) *Climate finance to fragile and conflict affected states and settings: is it that hard?*

¹⁹⁰ Farand, C. (2023) *COP 28 becomes first to focus on cycle of conflict and climate change*, Devex

¹⁹¹ International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) (2023) *Policy Brief: Strengthening Loss and Damage Narrative – Building cohesive voices with policymakers and civil society in Bangladesh*

throughout the displacement cycle -

- Before displacement – through adaptation, preparedness, anticipatory action and anticipating future mobility;
- During displacement – protecting agency and rights during mobility; and
- After displacement – including support for durable solutions including voluntary return, local integration or third country pathways.¹⁹²

The current momentum in both the international climate and refugee spaces, propelled by the recent GRF and COP 28, represents a crucial opportunity for increased cross-sectoral collaboration. In the case of already-displaced Rohingya, the complex ways that climate change is impacting their current displacement and increasing risks of secondary displacement, must be understood and addressed. The loss and damage fund presents a possible new mechanism through which to finance meaningful responses in cross-border displacement settings.

Most humanitarian interviewees were of the view that if climate finance could be harnessed to support resilience-building in Rohingya displacement settings, this would be welcome. However, in general, they were not optimistic of climate finance providing new streams of funding that would be significant in the context of overall humanitarian need, nor was there any confidence that it would resolve the core issues Rohingya are facing including a lack of durable solutions. Several referred to the complexities of accessing climate finance, including the need for the relevant body accessing funding to be accredited.

All were in agreement that in the face of chronic humanitarian funding shortfalls, there is a pressing need to diversify funding and donors. This includes working with non-traditional donors such as IFIs and the private sector, as well as mobilising climate funding for specific climate-related interventions with displaced populations - such as disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action, water and sanitation, environmental regeneration, and sustainable energy.



Photo credit: Sina Hasani/ DRC Bangladesh

¹⁹² Researching Internal Displacement (2023) [Loss and Damage and Displacement: Key Messages for the Road to COP 28](#)

5.4 Disaster risk reduction, preparedness and response

In Southeast Asia, several interviewees suggested the arguably less politically contentious disaster law framework as a possible entry point in responding to Rohingya displacement, referring to relatively strong regional coordination under the ASEAN's AADMER framework. The current AADMER Work Programme runs from 2021-2025, and work will begin on the next five-year programme in 2024. The current work programme includes a focus on 'empowering vulnerable groups through community-based disaster risk management and strengthened social protection mechanisms in disaster,' stating,

'As vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by disasters, it is crucial to ensure their resilience by enhancing their capacities to withstand shocks and put in place social protection safety nets. The operationalisation of the ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster-Responsive Social Protection is expected to enhance the capacity of ASEAN Member States to deliver disaster response and help vulnerable households build resilience to shocks and stresses through regional social protection programmes.'¹⁹³

There may be some opportunities to advocate for **mainstreaming of protection of vulnerable populations**, including non-citizens, into the next work programme and the disaster management framework. This could involve politically neutral language such as 'people present in the territory' - without reference to specific groups or their legal status - to ensure inclusion of all vulnerable groups including refugees. While this would be a positive step to increase protection of groups such as Rohingya in the context of disasters, there are arguments against over-reliance on such an approach as a standalone solution. Disaster law on its own does not have the capacity to address the root causes of Rohingya displacement which have strong political dimensions.

There has been an increasing focus in the region on **locally led disaster risk reduction (DRR), preparedness and response within displacement settings**, which may include - for example - nature-based solutions, early warning systems, anticipatory action, evacuations, planned relocation, and initiatives aimed at 'building back better.'¹⁹⁴

The 2023 ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Sustainable Resilience recognised the "escalating uncertainty and complexity of the disaster risk landscape in the region and interconnected transboundary risks and threats due to multi-layered compounding natural hazards" including in relation to climate change impacts. The Declaration highlighted that "resilience is local," referring to the position of local communities as the "first line of defence against emerging risks."¹⁹⁵ [*emphasis added*]

There has been strong regional interest in **anticipatory action**. Anticipatory action involves three components: 1) risk information, early warning, and forecasts; 2) anticipatory actions; and 3) pre-arranged financing. Examples include:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and IOM have designed 'A joint approach: Anticipatory Action as a solution for climate-induced displacement human mobility', for field testing in line with the ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management.¹⁹⁶ The approach includes guidance on predicting climate shocks in areas with high levels of displacement through identifying vulnerability indicators in already-displaced populations and surveying households to understand migration push and pull factors.¹⁹⁷
- Expansion of Bangladesh's national Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP), to camp-based refugees 'through identifying, training and equipping at least 100 CPP Rohingya volunteers in each of the 33 camps' to provide early warnings to trigger early action by individuals, families, community, and organisations.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ ASEAN [AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025](#) p37

¹⁹⁴ See, for example, UNDRR's December 2023 [Workshop on preventing, managing and finding solutions to disaster and climate-induced displacement, which focussed on internal displacement](#) in the Asia-Pacific region.

¹⁹⁵ ASEAN (2023) [ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Sustainable Resilience](#); Also see: ASEAN (2023) [ASEAN Disaster Law and Public Health Emergencies: Mapping and Guidelines](#)

¹⁹⁶ Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2022) [ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management](#)

¹⁹⁷ FAO and IOM (2023) [Climate-induced human mobility: How can anticipatory action play a role in Asia and the Pacific?](#) pp6-7

¹⁹⁸ Calabria et al (2022) [Anticipatory Action in Refugee and IDP Camps: Challenges, Opportunities, and Considerations](#) Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, p10

- In 2022, ASEAN launched its Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management, which aims to support regional coherence and coordination and defines anticipatory action as “a set of interventions that are carried out when a hazard poses imminent danger based on a forecast, early warning, or pre-disaster risk analysis.”¹⁹⁹

Early anticipatory action is seen as a smart financing measure that can save both lives and money. Bailatt has argued, ‘to avoid losses and damages associated with the experience of displacement, the best way remains to invest in anticipatory measures to prevent displacement and in development solutions to avoid displacement becoming unnecessarily protracted.’²⁰⁰ Groups such as the Rohingya who have been displaced by conflict are more likely to be secondarily displaced by disasters. This is because refugees often settle in hazard-prone areas, with temporary shelters, and usually have limited resources and local networks. Further, the rapid expansion of refugee settlements has had a detrimental impact on the natural environment in Cox’s Bazar, which in turn has increased the vulnerability of Rohingya to climate impacts. This underscores the value of environmental-safeguarding and disaster preparedness programming for already-displaced populations.²⁰¹ Localisation of such approaches, by ensuring integration of meaningful refugee participation and leadership, is more likely to be effective in context, and more likely to avoid maladaptation.²⁰² Rohingya are already central to emergency preparedness and response efforts in the camps, for example, 3,300 Rohingya Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers in Cox’s Bazar ‘play a pivotal role in disseminating cyclone Early Warning (EW) information and facilitating anticipatory actions to reduce the unprecedented loss and damage that cyclones can bring.’²⁰³

There are a number of context-specific challenges to implementation in Cox’s Bazar. Severe government restrictions on freedom of movement for Rohingya refugees limit effective disaster preparedness and response, where - for example, in the case of a cyclone or fire - mass evacuations of people out of the camps is not possible. Further, intersectional and trauma-informed responses recognise that many displacees have pre-existing trauma from their initial displacement from Myanmar, which may mean they are susceptible to “being severely impacted mentally by climate-related hazards”²⁰⁴ where feelings of loss of control are exacerbated, and past trauma is retriggered. Past trauma may lead to anxiety and a distrust of authorities, which may hinder a person’s ability to heed warnings and take early action in advance of a climate event.²⁰⁵ The government’s position that the Rohingya situation is temporary, resisting any durable infrastructure, prevents structural, long-term adaptation and DRR investments. Curfews in the camps mean that humanitarian actors are not present if a disaster strikes at nighttime. It is therefore critical that Rohingya are provided with the technical and material capacity to act as first responders in an emergency.

Early warning systems for cyclones, strong winds, and heavy rains are essential for timely preparation and precaution.

- 44-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh

¹⁹⁹ Anticipation Hub (2022) [A new framework to improve collaboration on anticipatory action in South-East Asia](#)

²⁰⁰ ailatt, A. (2023) [Seizing the Opportunity to Address Disaster Displacement in the Loss & Damage Discussions](#) Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

²⁰¹ Calabria et al (2022) [Anticipatory Action in Refugee and IDP Camps: Challenges, Opportunities, and Considerations](#) Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

²⁰² Danish Refugee Council and Stockholm Environment Institute (2022) [Exploring the Environment-Conflict-Migration Nexus in Asia, Asia Climate Framework - Research](#)

²⁰³ IFRC (2024) [Cox’s Bazar Camp Settlers Turned Heroes](#)

²⁰⁴ Calabria et al (2022) [Anticipatory Action in Refugee and IDP Camps: Challenges, Opportunities, and Considerations](#) Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

When we receive alerts (red signals) from CiC or Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) volunteers about cyclones or storms, we try to make our shelter stronger and securely tie down our shelter to try to make it safe.

- 43-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

We secure important documents and collect fresh water and some dry food before a strong cyclone.

- 44-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Comprehensive education about disaster preparedness and response is essential. This empowers Rohingya to make informed decisions and take proactive measures to safeguard themselves and their communities.

- 32-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

It's important to provide training about how to prevent natural fires and other disasters. All youths over 18 years old should be trained in fire rescue and we should be provided with water tanks.

- 58-year-old Rohingya man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Currently, there is only one cyclone centre in one camp which is not enough. The humanitarians should implement more cyclone centres around the camps. The humanitarians should keep some hired volunteers in each block whose role should be to support and carry vulnerable people when faced with evacuation from any disasters.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



When a massive fire broke out in camp-9, thousands of shelters were burnt. Several people got killed in the fire. They didn't receive any emergency response from the government or NGOs. We need to access such emergency responses immediately in the future.

- 27-year-old Rohingya woman, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



5.5 Localisation and refugee leadership

In the context of climate change in displacement settings, a grassroots and refugee-led response is more likely to avoid maladaptation, as top-down programming through ‘heavily intermediated and bureaucratised systems’²⁰⁶ often does not reach those most in need in appropriate ways. Displaced people must be seen not as victims, but as resourceful and capable actors with expertise that is crucial to effective humanitarian (and nexus) responses. In the October 2023 High-Level Meeting on Rohingya Refugees in Bangkok,²⁰⁷ Rohingya leaders delivered statements addressing the importance of empowering refugee-led organisations (RLOs) in building resilience and seeking sustainable solutions.²⁰⁸ Reframing refugees from passive recipients of aid to resourceful drivers of solutions – a paradigm shift aligning with inclusive and ‘transformative adaptation’ – is both a fiscally and ethically sound approach.

Rohingya are already involved as key actors in climate action and humanitarian initiatives in Bangladesh and the wider region. Rohingya diaspora have also been active in funding grassroots initiatives and engaging in advocacy. Rohingya key informants were commonly involved in and leading protection, resilience and adaptation work, information campaigns, as well as emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

However, Rohingya key informants reported that their roles are often informal, not respected or adequately recognised, and not fairly compensated (if at all). In addition, they described how structural barriers and government policy and attitudes have also limited the effectiveness of refugee-led and civil society efforts. Without the ability to formally establish a legal entity or maintain a bank account, Rohingya led organisations have difficulty in receiving donor funds to support their work. A youth leader in Cox’s Bazar also described an incident where his organisation’s attempted advocacy for relocation of Rohingya households from risky areas (in flood-prone or sloped areas) within the camps was rejected by CiC officers. The youth leader recalls that *“our proposal was rejected by CiC officers and instead we were warned to stay out of it... following that, we couldn’t take any further steps because CiC officers were hunting down civil society organisations at that time.”*

The limited availability of funding to RLOs and local actors reflects a global trend whereby existing climate funds rarely provide financial support directly to individuals impacted by climate-related events.²⁰⁹ Only 10% of climate finance is granted at the local level, with risk-averse donors preferring larger international organisations and national governments and over 80% of the Green Climate Fund remains directed towards international organisations.²¹⁰

There have been positive steps towards increasing uptake of locally led approaches, with over 80 governments and organisations signed onto the *Principles for Locally Led Adaptation*²¹¹ (the Principles), including Bangladesh. The Principles mark a shift from ‘top-down’ climate financing approaches and include devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level; addressing structural inequalities; investing in local capabilities; and collaborative (cross-sectoral) action and investment. The adoption of The Principles reflects a recognition that localisation is integral to ‘addressing questions of ownership, power sharing and responsibilities, while also providing affected communities with expertise and financial resources to face climate change.’²¹²

Bangladesh’s MCPP incorporates the concept of ‘locally led adaptation hubs to enhance local empowerment and resilience with loss and damage finance.’²¹³ The humanitarian sector should take the lead in building the capacity of Rohingya RLOs to engage with this policy framework, and advocate for refugee-inclusive national approaches that would allow for direct engagement by Rohingya RLOs.

²⁰⁶ Kamal, Adelina (2023) *‘Beyond the ‘Ecosystem’: A case for locally led Humanitarian Resistance* The Humanitarian Leader

²⁰⁷ UNHCR (2023) [2023 High-Level Meeting on Rohingya Refugees](#)

²⁰⁸ APRRN (2023) [Statements Delivered in the High-Level Meeting](#)

²⁰⁹ Researching Internal Displacement (2023) *Loss and Damage and Displacement: Key Messages for the Road to COP 28*

²¹⁰ IFRC (2022) *Where it matters most: Smart climate financing for the hardest hit people*, pp6, 19

²¹¹ Global Commission on Adaptation (2021) [Principles for Locally Led Adaptation](#)

²¹² Steinke, A. (2023) [Climate Change and Humanitarian Change](#) Centre for Humanitarian Action p17

²¹³ International Centre for Climate Change and Development (2023) [Policy Brief: Strengthening Loss and Damage Narrative – Building cohesive voices with policymakers and civil society in Bangladesh](#)

““

If a strong cyclone happens, our organisation's volunteers provide safety to elderly people, individuals with a disability, blind individuals, and pregnant women. Then we provide safety to animals like hens, ducks, and goats. If the cyclone were to intensify and become riskier, we evacuate all people to somewhere safe. After that, we arrange food for the people who have been evacuated. Following that, when the cyclone ends, we help them return to their shelters. We accompany the injured ones to the hospital.

- Rohingya community leader, women, Bhasan Char, Bangladesh

””

““

If we get the chance to work and provide services to our own people, we will be able to do that because we can understand one another better than anyone else. The humanitarians should collaborate with us regarding services and responses to our people. It would be better if Rohingya-led organisations are provided with funding to provide emergency responses, education and awareness to our people.

- Rohingya human rights advocate, woman, Delhi, India

””

““

When a disaster occurred and people were affected, our members collected contributions from ourselves to support the affected people. We know some Rohingya diaspora in foreign countries who were also involved in contributing along with us.

- Rohingya youth leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

””

““

If any disasters occur in a camp, the humanitarians can approach a Rohingya-led organisation which is closer to the disaster. The Rohingya organisation can distribute emergency responses to the actual affected people.

-Rohingya humanitarian worker, man, Aceh, Indonesia

””

““

When I was in Bangladesh, our organisation had a budget we would use to support people affected by fires or flooding... We would donate our own money individually to the organisation. I had a bank account in Bangladesh where I could receive funds to support affected people with food, clothes, drinking water and household items.

-Rohingya humanitarian worker, man, Aceh, Indonesia

””

When a serious flooding affected some households here, our organisation sought and received some donations from foreign individual donors so that we could support the affected households with meals and some household necessities. We found it difficult to have the money transferred to us... As we are Rohingyas, none of us has any bank accounts here. I have a Bangladeshi friend who has an account. I requested him to receive the money through his account and hand it over to us. So, we could receive it with the help of a Bangladeshi friend. We received it from the individual donors directly, not through any international organisation.

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Though our organisation isn't legally registered here, we have been working in the camps for a long time. Through our involvement in education services, we have had communication with some foreign humanitarians. One of them shared with us a proposal opportunity... After our proposal had been accepted for the grant, we faced some challenges to answer some questions from donors regarding money transactions, banking, grant management and fiscal agents. As we didn't have a bank account or a direct fiscal agent, the grant was delayed. We found it challenging to convince the donors, but we managed. At last, we had to find a Bangladeshi citizen with a bank account who is close to us personally and trustworthy. After all of this, the donors were convinced to approve the grant because our proposal was very detailed and captivating. So, we finally managed to receive the grant through the bank account of a Bangladeshi."

- Rohingya community leader, man, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

6 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Respondents reflected on some unresolved questions and key data gaps in relation to climate mobility and displacement in the Asia region, and highlighted possible areas for further context-specific research to inform advocacy, funding, humanitarian-peace-development interventions, and the development of national and regional policy:

1. How should protection actors be incorporating climate change into their programming?
2. How is climate change impacting Rohingya undertaking irregular maritime movement in the region, and related risks they face during such journeys?
3. How do we better predict climate-related displacement in order to improve investment and design of preparedness and response, including anticipatory action?
4. How can the capacity of affected communities be strengthened in order to lead on climate action and adaptation, preparedness, response and recovery from disasters? What are the benefits of such community-led responses and how does this approach compare to traditional humanitarian action?
5. The scope of the loss and damage fund includes nona-economic loss such as displacement, and therefore onward movement of Rohingya driven by climate change (particularly if maladaptive) may bring certain displacement-focussed responses within the scope of the fund. This is an area for further exploration. How do we quantify secondary ‘loss and damage’ in relation to already-displaced populations?
6. Are Rohingya at risk of ‘climate-induced forced return’ and what novel legal and normative considerations does this raise in relation to international responsibilities to provide protection in the context of already-displaced populations facing climate change risks?²¹⁴

²¹⁴ For example, the World Bank’s [Groundswell Report](#) (2021), deploys a scenario-based approach to project possible future internal climate migration outcomes in different regions

Protecting Refugees in Asia

– towards a coordinated regional approach

Protecting Refugees in Asia (PRIA) is a three-year ECHO-funded initiative launched in 2021 to address protection risks and needs of refugees in Southeast Asia. Phase II (2023-24) of the joint project of the Adventist Development & Relief Agency (ADRA), Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), HOST International Malaysia, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Indonesia, and the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), combines evidence-based research, programmatic and advocacy expertise to inform integrated regional protection responses in support of refugees. PRIA targets 65 local, 20 international, and 27 regional organisations with a particular focus on Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and India.

