



A study on
**Perception of People of Bangladesh
about Forcibly Displaced Myanmar
Nationals (FDMNs)**



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1. Introduction

Since 25 August 2017, an estimated 693,000 Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs) have fled [from](#) Burma's Rakhine State to escape the military's large-scale ethnic cleansing and took refugees across the border into Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh¹. They were forced to flee from the Rakhine state when the Myanmar military killed their women, men and children, raped women and girls, and burnt entire Rohingya villages². Although the initial reaction of Bangladesh was to deny the entry of the refugees, later it opened border and welcomed them considering the humanitarian urge. The crisis appears to be a burden to Bangladesh as the country is already afflicted by overpopulation and poverty. Some are welcoming the government's decision when it opened the boarder while others are also opposing the decision. Clearly there is a sense of anxiety regarding the future options for their return or resettlement, as well as local and national stability and peace in the region. In this context, it is necessary to know the opinion of people of Bangladesh about government's decision to give shelter to them. It is also necessary to know what people think about the impacts of the crisis and possibility of repatriation. Question also rises whether the people in Cox's Bazar who are facing the real crisis perceive the issue differently than those living in other region of the country. In this context, a perception survey to know the opinion of people of Bangladesh seemed necessary. A total of 1420 respondents from the whole country has been interviewed with the help of Divisional BRAC Representatives (DBRs). The study will help the government, international organizations, and other NGOs who are working with FDMNs to design their future action.

2. Research question

The study aims to know the perception of people of Bangladesh about the FDMNs. It attempts to address following specific questions:

1. Do people of Bangladesh think the government's decision to give shelter to the FDMN was right?
2. What is the perception of people about possible repatriation of the FDMNs?
3. How do they perceive about the impacts of giving shelter to the FDMNs?
4. What are possible steps people think necessary to undertake about the FDMNs?
5. Do people in Cox's Bazar perceive differently than those living in other regions?

¹Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). Situation report: Rohingya refugee crisis. Cox's bazar, May 10, 2018

²Amnesty International. [Min Aung Hlaing: Stop the Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar now](#)

3. Methodology

The study is predominantly an opinion survey, it followed a mixed method approach where both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected and then quantified through using statistical techniques. As the study aimed at finding out the opinion of people of Bangladesh about FDMNs, the whole Bangladesh was the study area. A total of 1420 respondents have been selected as the respondents of the study. 20 respondents from diverse socio-economic background (see table 1) from 63 (out of 64) administrative districts of the country were selected. For the convenience of comparison, 160 respondents were selected from eight sub-districts under Cox's bazar district. Non-probability based purposive sampling method has been followed to select the respondents. Data were collected from April 9 to April 15 of 2018.

Data were collected through face-to-face interview using pre-coded interview schedule. The interview schedule has been developed and pretested to ensure uniformity of the data. The interview schedule has been sent to the Divisional BRAC Representatives (DBRs) who directly collected the data from the respondents. After collection of data, they were edited and then coded in SPSS. The analysis has been basically made using SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentage were used to show the demographic profile of the respondents. Pie chart, bar diagram and statistical column were used to show the perception of respondents about the FDMNs. The comparative opinion of people living in Cox's Bazar and those living in other areas of Bangladesh have been presented through clustered column and bar diagram.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency (N=1420)	Percentage
Age	15-24	188	13.24
	25-34	476	33.52
	35-44	395	27.82
	45-54	227	15.99
	55-64	81	5.7
	65+	53	3.73
Gender	Male	732	51.55
	Female	681	47.96
	Others	7	0.49
Occupation	Government service	105	7.39
	Private service	202	14.23
	Home maker	431	30.35
	Farmer	105	7.39
	Day laborer	110	7.75
	Small business	199	14.02
	Students	104	7.32
	Unemployed	44	3.1
	Others	120	8.45

4. Findings of the study

Perception about the decision to give shelter to FDMNs

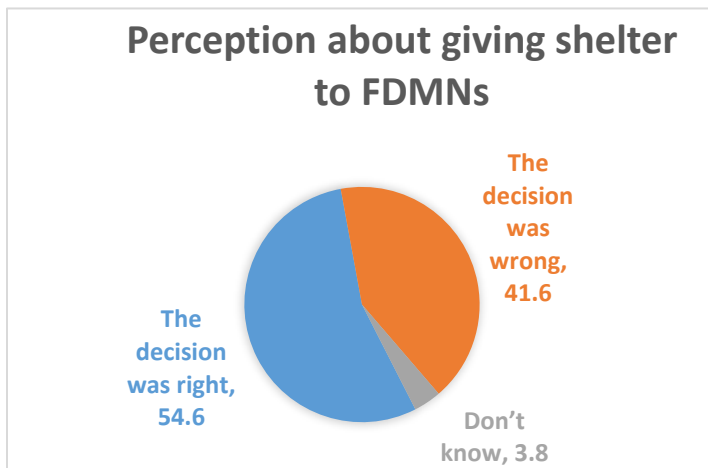


Figure 1: Perception of the respondents about the government's decision to give shelter the FDMNs

The researchers asked the respondents about their opinion regarding the government's decision to give shelter to the FDMNs. Figure 1 illustrates that more than half of the people interviewed welcomed the government's decision. Still, about 12 per cent of the respondents think that the decision was wrong. As shown in figure 2, those who justified the decision mainly did it from humanitarian (73.8 per cent) and religious perspective (20.4 per cent). The respondents who opined the decision to be wrong predominantly saw the issue from economic perspective. Fear

of increasing crime and conflict with local people and spreading communicable diseases was also reported to be the reason why they think the decision was wrong (see figure 3).

Perception about the repatriation of the FDMN

About two-third of the people the researchers interviewed think the repatriation is completely uncertain whereas only 13% opined that the repatriation will be possible by the year 2018/2019. Importantly, 11 per cent of them think that the repatriation will never be possible (see figure 4).

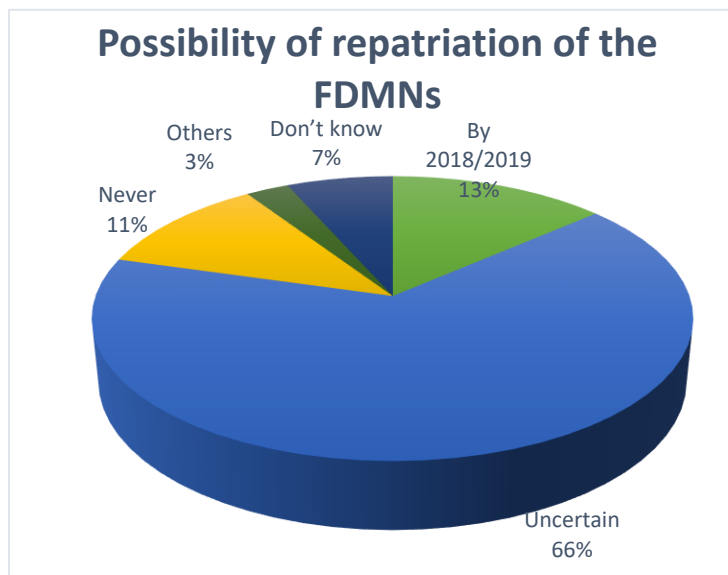


Figure 3: Reasons why they think the decision was wrong

Figure 4: Opinion of the respondents about the repatriation of the FDMNs

Possible impacts of giving shelter to the FDMNs

Respondents were asked about how they think the issue will impact on our country in the long run. As presented in figure 5, increase of crime (19.95%), food deficiency (17.48%) and price hike (16.85%) are the most possible impacts they reported. The respondents are also skeptical about increasing land grabbing and environmental degradation as a result of giving shelter to the FDMNs. Some respondents (8.54%) also think that the issue will affect the livelihood of people of Bangladesh. Probability of increasing drug addiction, communicable diseases, and extremism are some other minor concerns expressed by them.

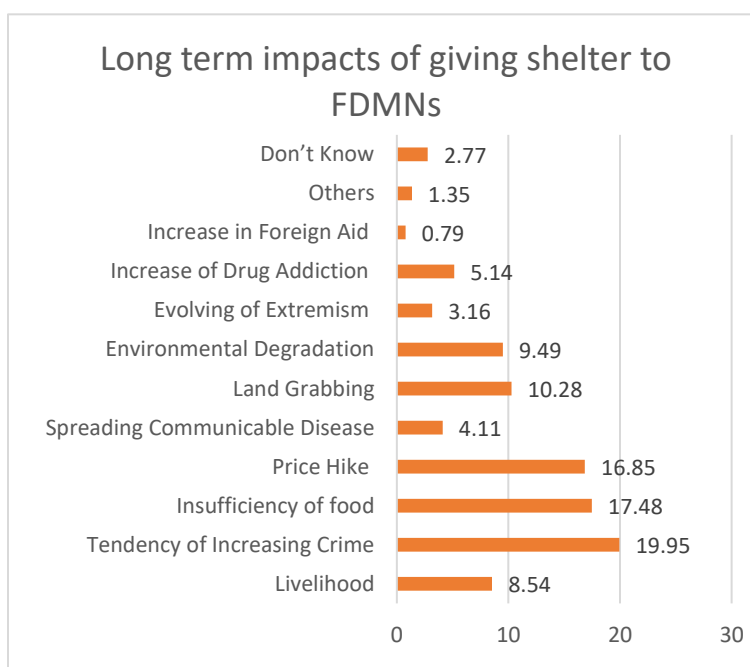


Figure 5: Opinion of the respondents about the possible impacts of giving shelter to the FDMNs

Suggested steps to be taken by the government

While asking for the possible intervention, most of the respondents, which constitute about 39%, emphasised on political solution to the problems through enhancing diplomatic relationship. Around one-fourth of the respondents suggested the government to look for sources of foreign aid to support the FDMNs. Although about 7 percent of the respondents found solution in

permanent placement of them, while around 6 percent of them are in favour of sending them to Myanmar forcefully (see figure 6).

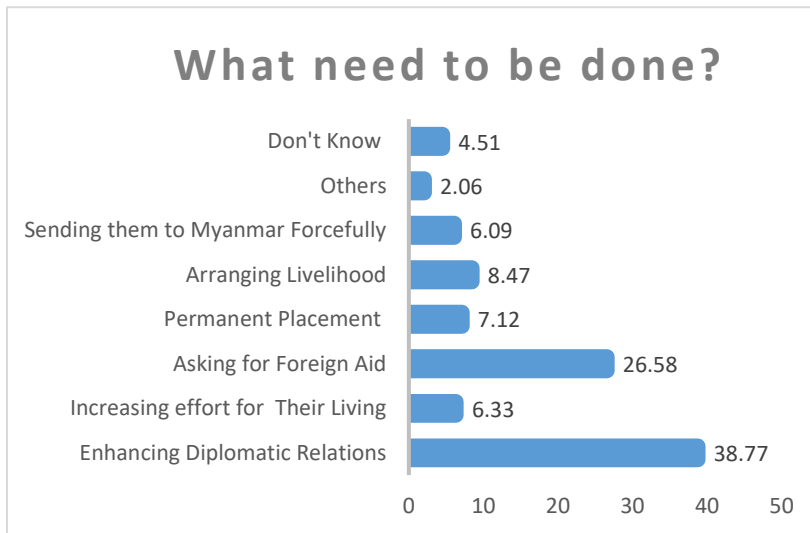


Figure 6: Suggestions of the respondents about the FDMNs

Do people in Cox’s Bazar and people in other regions of Bangladesh perceive similarly?

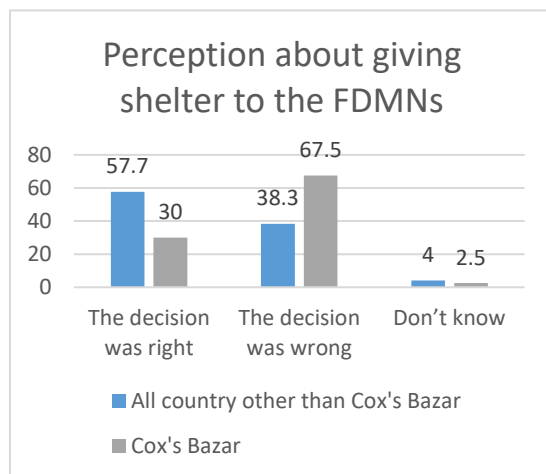


Figure 7: Difference in opinion about the decision to give shelter to the FDMNs

We analysed the data to find out if the people living Cox’s Bazar and those of other region of Bangladesh perceive the issue differently. Figure 7 depicts that the opinion of the people varies significantly in terms decision to give shelter to them and suggested interventions. As found, around 58 percent of people of Bangladesh (except those living in Cox’s Bazar) welcomed the decision whereas only 30 percent of those living in Cox’s bazar area think the decision was right. Majority of the respondents (about 68%) from Cox’s Bazar area are against the decision to give shelter to the FDMNs.

Half of the people in Cox’s Bazar district suggested the government to increase diplomatic relationship, whereas 38 percent of the people in Bangladesh (except Cox’s Bazar) did so. Most significantly, around 13 percent of people in Cox’s Bazar area opined to forcefully send the FDMNs to Myanmar, while only 6 percent of people other than Cox’s Bazar supported the possible intervention (see figure 8).

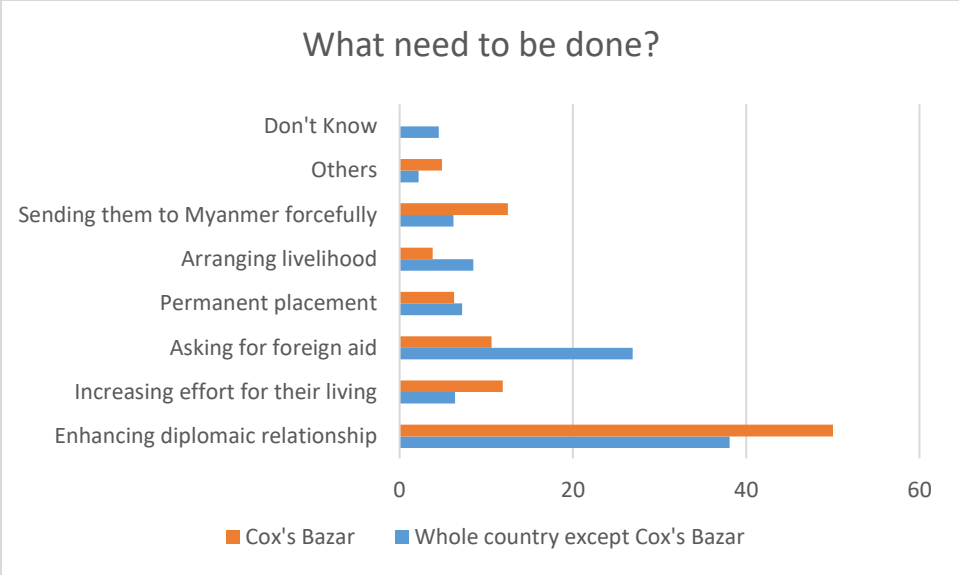


Figure 8: Difference in opinion about what should be done regarding the issue of FDMNs

5. Summary and conclusion

The study was about to know the opinion of people of Bangladesh about the FDMNs who fled Burma’s Rakhine State since 25 August, 2017. The study shows that the people in the country are divided into two sections in terms of opinion regarding the decision of giving shelter to them. Though most of the people think the decision to be right considering religious and humanitarian pleas, almost 40 per cent of them were not welcoming to the decision considering its impact in the long run. However, the perception of people of Cox’s Bazar regarding the decision of giving shelter to them was not same as the perception of people of other regions. Almost two third of them did not welcome the decision. Like others, most of the people of Bangladesh opine that the repatriation is completely uncertain. As much their opinions go, the issue will impact on our country in diverse ways, e.g., increasing criminal activities, price hike, food deficiency, land grabbing, increasing diseases and environmental degradation. Although most of them seek diplomatic solution and emphasise on looking for foreign donation, some of them also favour two extreme measures such as, sending them forcefully and permanent placement of them. It is worth mentioning that the study interviewed only 1420 people of Bangladesh. Large-scale survey is also necessary to know the opinion of people of Bangladesh about FDMNs.