



**10 YEARS FOR THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES  
IN BANGLADESH:  
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**



**(Petterik Wiggers, MSF, 2000)**

**Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland  
March 2002**

## **MSF CHARTER**

1. Médecins Sans Frontières provides aid to populations in distress, to victims of natural and man-made disasters, and to victims of armed conflict, without discrimination of race, religion, ideology or political affiliation.
2. Médecins Sans Frontières observes strict neutrality and impartiality. Based on universally recognised principles of medical ethics and the right to humanitarian assistance, Médecins Sans Frontières demands complete freedom in the performance of its task.
3. The members, volunteers and staff of Médecins Sans Frontières observe the medical code of conduct and maintain complete freedom from any political, religious or economic power.
4. The members, volunteers and staff of Médecins Sans Frontières decide for themselves whether the risks and dangers of the work are acceptable and do not demand any compensation whatsoever for themselves or claimants aside from what the organisation can give them.

***Médecins Sans Frontières is a private, international, non-governmental, humanitarian organisation.***

## CONTENTS

Abbreviations	4
Chronology of Main Events	5
Introduction	8
In Myanmar	
History of the Rohingya Muslims	9
Background to the Exodus	10
In Bangladesh	
The Humanitarian Situation in the Camps	12
Food and Nutrition	12
Health and Health Care	15
Water	16
Sanitation	18
Housing	18
Restricted Freedoms and Opportunities	19
Education and Self-Help Activities	21
Repatriation	22
Protection	24
New Arrivals	27
An Uncertain Future	29
References	32
Annexes	34

## ABBREVIATIONS

BDRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
CiC	Camp-in-Charge
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GoM	Government of Myanmar
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission
RTI	Respiratory Tract Infection
LORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

## CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

- 1978* Approximately 200,000 Rohingya Muslims flee the Burmese army's Operation Nagamin (Dragon King). About 10,000 refugees remain in Bangladesh, 10,000 die in the camps, and 180,000 are forcibly repatriated.
- 1991- 1992* Influx of approximately 250,000 Rohingya Muslims due to forced labour, land confiscation, religious intolerance, rape, and other forms of persecution by the Myanmar military regime.
- February 1992* UNHCR and international humanitarian organisations establish a broad relief operation in 19 to 20 camps along the Teknaf - Cox's Bazar Road.
- April 1992* Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar, setting the terms of the repatriation programme and allowing limited UNHCR involvement.
- May 1992* Nutrition survey conducted by Helen Keller International finds famine-like rates of acute malnutrition among Rohingya refugee children under five (20 to 49 percent).
- The GoB closes the camps to additional Rohingya arrivals. (Registration of the refugees completed by September 1992.)
- Sept-Dec. 1992* The GoB carries out repatriation without UNHCR involvement, which is reported to be forced. The international community protests, including the UNHCR, which withdraws from the process until private interviews with the refugees are allowed.
- May 1993* MOU signed between the UNHCR and GoB, guaranteeing protection of the refugees in the camps and voluntary repatriation through private interviewing of refugees.
- November 1993* MOU signed between the UNHCR and GoM, allowing the UNHCR access to the returnees, the issuance of identity cards, and freedom of movement for the Rohingyas.
- February 1994* UNHCR establishes a limited presence in Rakhine State, Myanmar. (Full access to all parts of the State is achieved by the end of the year.)
- July 1994* UNHCR announces promotion sessions and mass registration (in place of information sessions and individual interviewing) for repatriation.
- August 1994* UNHCR begins mass registration sessions, and states that out of 176,000 registered, 95 percent opt for voluntary repatriation. December 1995 is set as the deadline to return the remaining 190,000 refugees.
- March 1995* MSF leads an awareness survey among refugees, and finds that 63 percent did not want to return to Myanmar, and 65 percent were not aware of the right to refuse repatriation.
- March 1996* Reports of influxes of Rohingya new arrivals, and GoB 'push-back' policy at the border.

<i>April 1996</i>	About 15 Rohingyas drown after a boat prevented from landing at the Bangladeshi shore capsizes.
<i>Mid-1996</i>	Formal education activities in some camps are approved.
<i>January to May 1997</i>	Reports again of influxes of Rohingya new arrivals from Myanmar.
<i>July 1997</i>	An armed, overnight round-up and deportation of approximately 350 persons set off a strike by the refugees in the camps, and a boycott of humanitarian services.
<i>October 1998</i>	The refugee strike is put to an end and many male refugees are arrested. During the previous 15 months, repatriation exercises were halted.
<i>November 1998</i>	Repatriation resumes, but the GoM issues bureaucratic obstacles and refuses to accept 7,000 previously cleared refugees.
<i>January to April 1999</i>	UNHCR starts actively scaling down activities in the camps in view of closing operations by May 1999.
<i>April 1999</i>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata requests temporary status for the remaining refugees, with rights to work, education, and health care. The GoB replies with an official no.
<i>May 1999</i>	The UNHCR states to MSF-H and Concern that it will stay beyond 1999.  MSF-H and Concern report several cases of involuntary repatriation.
<i>August 1999</i>	UNHCR announces food for work plans for the refugees, but the GoB blocks implementation.
<i>Oct. - Nov. 1999</i>	WFP conducts a vulnerability survey among the refugees, after wasting (chronic malnutrition) in refugee children under five increased significantly over the previous 18 months.
<i>January 2000</i>	Formal education programmes in Nayapara camp are allowed.
<i>April-May 2000</i>	Many patients on the 'vulnerability list' (unfit for repatriation) are discovered at the departure point (from which repatriation takes place). Except for one refugee, their repatriation is halted.
<i>August 2000</i>	After months of urging, long stays at the departure point, where there is no access to medical care, are ended.
<i>July 2000</i>	The WFP/UNHCR vulnerability survey (conducted in October 1999) is released and finds 63 percent of the under-five children and 56 percent of the adult women were chronically malnourished, due to a shortage of food, among other reasons.
<i>October 2000</i>	A large number of newborns are discovered whose births have not been registered, therefore not entitling them to food nor medical care. The issue is raised with the UNHCR and RRRC.

- November 2000* An MSF nutrition survey finds 62 percent of the Nayapara refugee population, irrespective of age and sex, suffering from chronic malnutrition.
- February 2001* Violent clashes between Buddhists and Muslims are reported in Rakhine State, Myanmar.
- The GoB agrees to register all newborn babies that have not been properly registered.
- March 2001* UNHCR lists 200 unregistered children dating back at least two years. The Kutupalong CiC begins officially registering without problem, while the Nayapara CiC agrees to give food rations and medical care, but not registration.
- July 2001* The WFP 'Food Economy' survey concludes that chronic malnutrition in the camps is due to a problem with food, not disease. It recommends increasing and diversifying the rations, and expanding education activities.
- December 2001* An outbreak of typhoid in Nayapara camp compels the UNHCR and camp officials with MSF to conduct an investigation into the water supply system. After acknowledging that the system is not optimally operated at full capacity, agreements are made to improve the supply to meet international standards.
- January 2002* UNHCR announces plans to revive repatriation, with information and counselling sessions, among other measures.
- February 2002* Draft nutrition survey conducted by Concern on the request of UNHCR shows again unacceptably high rates of chronic malnutrition: 53 percent of the adults and 58 percent of the children.
- UNHCR and the GoB announce plans to move 5,000 refugees 'cleared' by the GoM from Nayapara to Kutupalong to reduce the costs of transporting water to Nayapara, and to separate the cleared refugees from 'anti-repatriation' elements. (Many of the cleared refugees are unwilling to repatriate.)

## INTRODUCTION

*I was born in Burma, but the Burmese government says I don't belong there. I grew up in Bangladesh, but the Bangladesh government says I cannot stay here. As a Rohingya, I feel I am caught between a crocodile and a snake.*

– 19-year-old refugee, Nayapara camp

The year 2002 marks the 10th anniversary of the flight of the Rohingya refugees from Rakhine State, Myanmar to Bangladesh. Discrimination, violence and forced labour practices by the Myanmar authorities triggered an exodus of more than 250,000 Rohingya Muslims between 1991 and 1992. Over the years, approximately 232,000 refugees have been repatriated to Myanmar under the supervision of the UNHCR, and 21,600 remain in two camps.

The 10th anniversary comes at a time when the world is challenged with a growing number of refugees, and the right to asylum and funding for refugee assistance and protection are ever diminishing. The Rohingya refugee – unwanted in his/her land of birth, and no longer welcomed in his/her land of refuge – is mired in the consequences of this trend, facing an uncertain future.

Throughout their decade of exile, the Rohingya refugees have endured conditions that have fallen far short of the commitments guaranteed to them in the UN Refugee Convention of 1951. Today, the refugees still live in emergency-like conditions that are substandard and unhealthy. Not allowed to leave the camp freely, they have been confined to overcrowded, tight spaces, with insufficient water, inadequate shelter, and few educational opportunities. The majority of the refugees are malnourished. They do not have sufficient food to feed their families, nor are they allowed to work or farm. As a result, 58 percent of the refugee children suffer from chronic malnutrition, exposing them to disease and hampering their physical and mental development.

Over the years, the Rohingyas have confronted waves of aggression and intimidation. Many have been sent back to Myanmar against their will, in violation of the principle of voluntary repatriation. Though incidents of involuntary repatriation have declined in recent years, hostility and violence by camp officials persist.

Since 1992, Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland (MSF) has provided outpatient and in-patient care to the Rohingya refugees, operated feeding centres for malnourished children and mothers, and assisted in water and sanitation services. As a medical, humanitarian organisation, MSF is bound not only to attend to the medical and humanitarian needs of the refugees, but also to address the abuse and neglect of their rights. MSF feels obligated to convey the refugees' experiences to the international community to encourage solutions that best preserve their human dignity.

The purpose of this report is to provide an understanding of the condition of the Rohingya refugee now and over the last decade. The report will first look briefly at the past, providing a short history of the Rohingya Muslim group and reasons for their flight from Myanmar. Next, it will examine the present humanitarian situation of the refugees in the camps and the issues surrounding their safety and protection. Finally, it will ponder the future of the refugees and what their options are, if any, for a lasting solution.

Interwoven throughout the document are some of the refugees' reflections on the past, present, and future, extracted from conversations with MSF staff in recent months, and from a casual survey conducted by MSF in January 2002. It is hoped that the reader will take away from this report an image of the Rohingya refugee not as a burden nor 'residual caseload,' but as a human being, with hopes, needs, and rights.



## IN MYANMAR

### HISTORY OF THE ROHINGYA MUSLIMS

The Rohingya Muslims<sup>1</sup> are predominantly concentrated in the northern part of Rakhine State (Arakan),<sup>2</sup> numbering approximately 1.4 million, almost half the state's total population. Arakan found itself at the crossroads of two worlds: South Asia and Southeast Asia, between Muslim-Hindu Asia and Buddhist Asia, and amidst the Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid races. During its days as an independent kingdom until 1784, Arakan encompassed at times the Chittagong region in the southern part of today's Bangladesh.



The Arakanese had their first contact with Islam in the 9th century, when Arab merchants docked at an Arakan port on their way to China. The Rohingyas claim to be descendants of this first group, racially mixing over the centuries with Muslims from Afghanistan, Persia, Turkey, the Arab peninsula, and Bengal. The merging of these races arguably constituted an ethnically distinct group with its own dialect.

In 1784, the Burman king Bodawpaya conquered and annexed Arakan, triggering a long guerrilla war in which the Burman army allegedly killed more than 200,000 Arakanese and solicited forced labour to build Buddhist temples. The failed attempt in 1796 to overthrow Burman rule resulted in the exodus of almost two-thirds the Muslim Arakanese population into the Chittagong area, or today's Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Such was the beginning of periodic influxes of refugees from Arakan into Bengal.

When the British incorporated Arakan and the rest of Burma into its empire by 1885, many refugees returned to Arakan. For centuries, the Buddhist Rakhine<sup>3</sup> and Arakanese Muslims co-existed relatively quietly, until the Second World War. The advance of the Japanese army in 1942 sparked both the exodus of thousands of Muslims and the evacuation of the British from Arakan, creating a political void.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Rohingya" will be used in this document to refer to all refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh, though some may be Hindu, or from another Muslim ethnic group. All are denied Myanmar citizenship.

<sup>2</sup> Burma was changed to Myanmar, and Arakan to Rakhine, by the military government in 1989. The original names will be used for references prior to 1989.

<sup>3</sup> The Rakhine people, believed to be a mixture of an indigenous Hindu group and the Mongols, have inhabited Arakan since early historical times. Today, the Rakhine are Buddhist, speak a dialect of Burmese, and constitute the majority ethnic group in the whole of Rakhine State.

Communal riots between the Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingyas erupted, and some 22,000 Muslims fled to adjoining British Indian territories.

During the Japanese occupation, allegiances were divided: the Rakhine were loyal to the Japanese, and the Rohingyas to the British (neither commitment sat well with the Burmans). In return for their loyalty, the British promised the Rohingyas autonomy in the northern part of the state, and consequently many refugees returned to Arakan. But the promise was not honoured. The Muslims' repeated demands for autonomy were viewed by the Burmese administration as betrayal and territorial undermining, fuelling their attitude of suspicion and estrangement toward the Rohingyas that lingers today.

Shortly after Burma's independence in 1948, some Muslims carried out an armed rebellion demanding an independent Muslim state within the Union of Burma. Though the rebellion was quashed in 1954, Muslim militancy nevertheless entrenched the distrust of the Burmese administration, and a backlash ensued that echoes today: Muslims were removed and barred from civil posts, restrictions on movement were imposed, and property and land were confiscated. Even so, the Rohingyas were close to having their ethnicity and autonomy recognised in the 1950s under the democratic government of U Nu, but plans were thwarted by the military coup of General Ne Win in 1962.

### **BACKGROUND TO THE EXODUS**

Ne Win's Burma Socialist People's Party claimed that the Chinese and Indians – with the Muslims of Arakan grouped among them – were illegal immigrants who had settled in Burma during British rule. The central government took measures to drive them out, starting with the denial of citizenship.

The 1974 Emergency Immigration Act stripped the Rohingyas of their nationality, rendering them foreigners in their own land. The denial of citizenship inarguably remains the root cause of the Rohingyas' endless cycle of forced migration.

In 1977, the Burmese military government launched an operation called Naga Min, or Dragon King, to register the citizens and prosecute the illegal entrants. The nation-wide campaign started in Rakhine State, and the mass arrests and persecution, accompanied by violence and brute force, triggered an exodus in 1978 of approximately 200,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh. Within 16 months of their arrival, most were forced back after bilateral agreements were made between the governments of Burma and Bangladesh. Some 10,000 refugees died, mostly women and children, due to severe malnutrition and illness after food rations were cut to compel them to leave.

***This is my third time in Bangladesh. The first time I was a young boy. The second time I remember terrible things. We were safe here for a short time after Naga Min, but then the food was stopped, and we were pushed back on the boats to go back to Burma. We were told that all the problems in Burma were solved. But now I am back again!***

**– 65-year-old male refugee, Kutupalong**

The situation in Burma had not changed upon their return. Many Muslims returned landless and without documentation. Denied citizenship, they were uniquely subjected to institutional discrimination and other abuses, including limitations on access to education, employment, and public services, and restrictions on the freedom of movement.

1988 saw the bloody crackdown of pro-democracy demonstrations nationwide by the re-named State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). 1990 brought elections, in which the Muslims actually voted and were represented, but which the SLORC refused to recognise.

Shortly thereafter, the SLORC dramatically increased its military presence in northern Rakhine State. The junta justified the exercise as a fortification against Rohingya Muslim extremist insurgents. Construction of military establishments and roads sprawled throughout northern Rakhine and the border

with Bangladesh. The build-up was accompanied by compulsory labour, land and property confiscation, and forced relocation, as well as rape, summary executions, and physical torture. Mosques were destroyed, religious activities were banned, and Muslim leaders were harassed.

*I and some other men were taken by soldiers while we were praying in the mosque. We were taken for one month to work building a military camp. I couldn't wash; there was little water and food. If I couldn't carry something heavy, they kicked me. So what to do? We decided to leave.*

– Refugee male in Kutupalong, 55 years old

*Our land, house, and animals were taken away, and an army camp was built on our land. When the men went to ask to have at least our animals back, they were beaten. The soldiers tried to rape me, but my family and neighbours chased them away. We left without any belongings.*

– Refugee woman, 35 years old, in Nayapara

The violence, impoverishment, and religious intolerance all conspired to again drive out approximately 250,000 Rakhine Muslims into Bangladesh from mid-1991 to early 1992.



**Rohingyas arriving on Bangladeshi shores, February 1992  
(Roelf Padt, MSF, 1992)**

## IN BANGLADESH

### THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN THE CAMPS

*Life is not well; we're just suffering well.*

– 23-year-old woman in Nayapara.

Initially, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) welcomed the Rohingyas and made substantial efforts to accommodate them. But the GoB had clearly maintained from the beginning that asylum for the refugees was temporary and encouraged their immediate return.

Of the original 20 refugee camps that were constructed in 1992 in south-western Bangladesh, only two remain: Nayapara camp near Teknaf and Kutupalong camp near Ukhia, giving shelter to 21,621 refugees. Kutupalong camp officially houses 8,216 refugees, and Nayapara 13,405, as of December 2001.<sup>4</sup> The size of the population in relation to the size of the actual living space accounts for many concerns, including health conditions, water and sanitation, and housing.

### Food and Malnutrition

*I might have enough food for two meals, but never for three meals per day. The children always ask for more.*

– 31-40-year-old male in Nayapara, family size of nine

For 10 years running, the majority of the Rohingya refugees have been malnourished. In a closed-camp setting, the refugees still do not have enough food. Today, 58 percent of the refugee children and 53 percent of the adults are chronically malnourished.<sup>5</sup>



**Infant and mother at Nayapara's therapeutic feeding centre  
(Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)**

---

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR figures.

<sup>5</sup> Concern, ÖDRAFT Nutrition Survey in Kutupalong and Nayapara Camps among the Rohingya Refugees, Ö November 2001, p. 2.

Surveys conducted regularly since 1992 have consistently found unacceptably high rates of malnutrition among the adult and children refugees. And these rates have always been worse than the average for Bangladesh. Each study has cited food insecurity<sup>6</sup> as a result of a shortage of food. In an informal MSF survey conducted in January 2002 (presented in the Annexes), the refugees scored food as their number one concern (Table 4, Annex I), with most explaining that they sometimes or never have enough food to feed their families because the ration was insufficient (Tables 7a and 7b).

***I have enough food for maybe four to five days, but not the whole week.***

**– Kutupalong refugee male, 31-40 years old, family size of 12**

The Rohingya refugees do not have enough to eat because of a combination of circumstances. One is that almost none of the refugees are receiving his or her full ration. The refugees are totally dependent on the weekly distribution of food. Each family member, including babies from the day of birth, is entitled to the same ration amount and composition. The ration amounts were increased only in June 2000 to meet the standard for minimum daily energy requirements.<sup>7</sup>

At no time since food basket monitoring<sup>8</sup> started in 1996 have the rations reached the 100 percent mark.<sup>9</sup> Breaks in the WFP supply line is one reason for the shortfall. And if a certain item in the food ration package did not make it at all to the weekly distribution, a substitute or increase in other foods were often not arranged.

Even if all the food commodities were available that week, many refugees would claim that ‘the people who distribute the food keep some for themselves’ (Table 7b). The Bangladeshi Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) is responsible for the weekly distribution and had hired residents from the surrounding villages to carry it out.

***Only when you [MSF] are present at the distribution do we get the correct amount of ration.***

**– 25-year-old woman, Nayapara**

In January 2002, BDRCS reformed the food distribution system by replacing the locally hired workers with refugees to dispense the weekly food rations. Many refugees did remark that since this shift took place, the portions were more accurate. And this accounts for their feeling that overall camp conditions after 10 years have changed for the better (Table 12a).

Even with the improvement in distribution, the fact remains that not all refugees entitled to a ration are actually receiving it. For example, newborn babies whom the government fails to register, and households whose family books have been confiscated<sup>10</sup> are denied their right to food assistance, and essentially left to their own devices to manage. They often share the rations of other refugees. That food is consumed by those other than the registered refugees cannot be discounted as one explanation for a shortage of food.

---

<sup>6</sup> According to the WFP, food security is defined as ‘the ability of a household to produce or access at all times the minimum food needed for a healthy life.’

<sup>7</sup> For Bangladesh, the minimum daily energy requirements were set at 2,122 kilocalories. WFP discovered in 2000 that the refugees were consuming an average of 1,600 kilocalories each day.

<sup>8</sup> Food basket monitoring is conducted by staff of MSF-Holland and Concern in their respective camps to record discrepancies in distribution. A sample ration is taken at random and each item is weighed separately. The figures are submitted to the UNHCR at the end of each month.

<sup>9</sup> The Food Economy Group/WFP, ‘Report of an Explorative Study of Food Security Issues in Camps,’ June 2001, p.13. The Group calculated that the refugees were getting only 88 percent of their ration each week.

<sup>10</sup> The family book is the identity document of the registered refugee, and is required to access food, non-food items in the ration package, and medical care. It is often used as leverage and a tool of force. Some families have refused to reclaim their family books out of fear or in protest of repatriation.

***I receive rations for five people, but there are 10 people in my house. I borrow food from my neighbours, or I sell or trade other things to get more food.***

**– 41-year-old male, in Nayapara**

For many, food is the only source of income, as employment is prohibited. In the absence of cash, rice, for instance, might be bartered or sold to obtain green vegetables or clothes, or other items that are not included in the ration package. Selling or trading food rations therefore also results in a subsequent shortage.

***Last rainy season, the plastic roof had holes. I sold food rations to save money and buy some plastic from Ukhia.***

**– 21-30 year-old Kutupalong woman**

Borrowing, lending, trading, selling and buying food are common coping mechanisms among the refugees to compensate for the food deficit. These coping strategies tend to create a situation of ‘food debt.’ To pay back the loan of one, a refugee borrows from another, or immediately apports out that amount from the next distribution. This in turn can generate an endless cycle of food shortage.

***I have to borrow sometimes up to five kilograms of food a week to feed my family. I pay it back slowly.***

**– Nayapara woman, over 41 years old, family size of 16**

The weekly food basket consists of rice, pulses, oil, sugar, and blended food. Though they may be high in nutrients, they do not make for many recipes. In order to add a little variety and dignity to their diets, refugees will sell or trade ration items for other foods, most commonly fish and vegetables.

***We have been eating the same foods for 10 years. Who can eat only rice and dahl everyday, for 10 years?!***

**– 21-30 year-old Nayapara man**

The need for a diversified diet is necessary not only to satisfy the palate, but also for nutritional balance. A widespread deficiency in Vitamin B2, associated with inadequate consumption of milk and other animal proteins, is regularly detected among children showing signs of angular stomatitis, or chapped corners of the mouth. A vulnerability survey conducted by WFP in 1999, and all surveys since, have strongly recommended measures to vary the diet to combat deficiencies in vitamins and minerals that only encourage malnutrition.

In June 2000, the distribution of vegetable seeds and chicks among vulnerable households was unofficially approved. It is hoped that this measure will not only expand the food supply and variety, but will also restore a sense of self-sufficiency and responsibility among these refugees.

In June 2001, additional suggestions were made to increase the amount and variety of the ration, such as school feeding, additional food-for-work activities, and the distribution of fresh foods. But these recommendations have yet to be implemented.

Even so, most actors involved in the Rohingya refugee operation have demonstrated a commitment to stamping out malnutrition in the camps. WFP launched in January 2002 a US\$2.1 million appeal for the means to end the years of chronic malnutrition.

While the recommendations may improve the access to and availability of food, it is still uncertain whether they will ensure a sufficient amount of food. Perpetual hunger, heightened vulnerability to disease, and hampered growth will only be overcome if the Rohingya refugees get enough to eat everyday.

*I think the solutions to our food problem are easy: increase the ration; let us have dry fish and potatoes; and give us permission to move freely to earn money.*

– 20-year-old woman in Kutupalong

It is possible that further efforts to increase and diversify the rations will face political obstacles, in light of the GoB's belief that free food is an incentive to remain in Bangladesh. Food has been used as a tool of coercion and intimidation in the past.

### **Health and Healthcare**

Despite its nutritional setbacks, the overall health status of the refugees is stable. What remains concerning is that the predominant health problems are related to the substandard living conditions in the camp.

A large population in a tight space has a significant impact on the overall quality of health. Respiratory tract infections (RTI), such as the common cold, continue to be the top cause of overall morbidity year round for children under five. Other communicable diseases, such as chicken pox, also happily thrive in densely populated areas. During the winter season, the number of in-patient admissions rises, especially among infants and children.

Diarrhoea and skin diseases regularly battle for a close second to RTIs, most commonly as a result of unhygienic surroundings and habits, and untreated water. It is hoped these rates will decrease with recent efforts to improve the water supply in Nayapara camp (see below).

The mortality rate in the camps remains low, although neo-natal deaths in recent years account for the highest number of deaths. It is suspected that these babies were born with too low a birth weight to survive in these circumstances. Low birth weight derives from a malnourished mother.



**Blood sample taken from a refugee boy, Nayapara camp  
(Petterik Wiggers, MSF, 2000)**

In Nayapara camp, MSF runs in- and out-patient treatment departments, therapeutic and supplementary feeding centres, reproductive health programmes, health and hygiene promotion sessions, a microscopy laboratory, and water and sanitation activities. In Kutupalong camp, Concern, an Irish NGO, is responsible for health and nutrition, sanitation, non-food items distribution, food ration monitoring, primary education, non-formal adult education, and seed and poultry distribution. The target populations for both MSF and Concern are children under 10 years of age, pregnant and lactating women, and women of child-bearing age.

Both MSF and Concern have enhanced their health education activities, involving hygiene promotion, nutrition, and reproductive health. These initiatives support the call to place a stronger emphasis on preventive care, as curative care facilities are well-established. All refugee children under 10 are immunised, and Vitamin A is also distributed to prevent health conditions resulting from nutrient deficiencies, such as night blindness.

To encourage greater involvement of the refugees in the promotion of healthy habits, several refugee volunteers have been trained as community health workers. They support many in-camp health activities, such as screening for malnutrition and conducting health and hygiene education sessions.

While these preventive measures are essential to control morbidity and mortality among the refugee population, it needs to be said that the most effective safeguard against the above-stated health problems is an improvement in the camp's environment. Expansion of the living spaces and upgrades in the water and sanitation infrastructure can effectively reduce refugee morbidity. Environmental well-being not only benefits physical health, but also mental well-being. A few refugees explained why they felt conditions in the camps over the decade had improved: because their camps were cleaner (Table 12a).

Reproductive health services include antenatal care, training and support of traditional birth attendants, and family planning. The camps show high rates of pregnancy and birth, so much that the number of births have outnumbered in recent years the rates of death and repatriation combined. This fact is a major source of anxiety for the Bangladeshi authorities, who have at times called on MSF and Concern to institute family planning practices that are contrary to medical ethics.

MSF and Concern provide counselling to women of 15 to 45 year of age on birth spacing and birth control. 23 percent of the women in Nayapara and 29 percent in Kutupalong are currently engaged in family planning activities. The numbers continue to increase only slowly, as side-effects and cultural beliefs are significant barriers for many to participate.

Those refugees not in the NGOs' target population – the over-10-year-olds and non-pregnant/lactating women – can seek care at the health facilities provided by the Ministry of Health (MOH). However, many refugees in MSF's January 2002 survey complained that they were generally dissatisfied with the services provided by the MOH, chiefly because of disrespectful behaviour displayed by the MOH doctor (Table 8b). Other refugees revealed that the MOH doctor required payment for services, or for a referral to a health complex outside the camp. This serious matter remains under investigation. MSF and Concern health facilities were also criticised by a small number of refugees, because of long waits for consultation, a poor drug supply, and 'improper treatment.'

***Only when we are near death does the doctor give us treatment.***  
**– 31-40-year-old refugee woman in Kutupalong**

### **Water**

In Nayapara camp, the supply of water has always been a major health concern.<sup>11</sup> The water level of the Nayapara reservoir suffers from a shortage during the dry season. From February to May, nearly 225,000 litres of water is trucked in daily from a nearby dam.<sup>12</sup> Water rationing is often imposed throughout the year, with the dry season scarcity used as the explanation.

The UNHCR finances a government department to supply the water in the camps and maintain the facilities. Water is transported from the hilly forests through canals to a reservoir, and treated in water treatment plants. MSF is responsible for monitoring the quality of the water in Nayapara camp.

---

<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Kutupalong camp remains comparatively self-sufficient in terms of water supply, with 41 fully functioning tube wells.

<sup>12</sup> In January 2002, the GoB and UNHCR agreed to move 5,000 refugees from Nayapara to Kutupalong camp as a means of reducing the trucking costs during the dry season.



Monthly UNHCR reports have indicated a supply of 25 litres of water per refugee per day in Nayapara, which is above the minimum acceptable level of 15-20 litres.<sup>13</sup> MSF has long contested this figure, arguing that the refugees have in fact been receiving only 6-8 litres each per day.

The operating time of the water taps – originally two hours per day – was one cause of the discrepancy. In fact, most of the refugees in MSF’s January 2002 survey indicated that the water taps were never open long enough (Table 5b). They managed to collect only three to four containers (45-60 litres in total) per family per day. With an average family size of 6.5, it is quite clear that the refugees were not attaining the daily 25 litres per person.



**Queuing at the water taps, Nayapara camp (Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)**

Another cause of the water shortage was the miscalculation that the amount of water allocated for Nayapara is consumed only by the refugees. In fact, there are hundreds of additional consumers using the supply, including the facilities of MSF and other agencies, 160 camp security personnel, and some villagers. An additional source of the scarcity is the structure itself. The water supply network, including the treatment plant, was installed 10 years ago as an emergency response. By now, the permanent infrastructure has run down, the pipes are exposed and leaking, and the storage tanks have rusted.

The vast majority of refugees from Nayapara, but very few from Kutupalong, in MSF’s January 2002 survey stated that they sometimes or never have enough water to accommodate their daily needs (Table 5a). Most explained that they have compensated by drawing water from sources outside the camp, or by digging wells in secluded areas inside the camp<sup>14</sup> (Table 5b).

Skin diseases, such as scabies, and diarrhoea have been in MSF’s top five causes of overall morbidity since 1992. But neither the high incidence of water-related diseases, nor the claims of the refugees themselves convinced the responsible actors that the refugees were suffering from a lack of water.

***I have to spare water for my other family members. So sometimes I bathe only two to three times per month.***

**– 21-30-year-old woman in Nayapara, household size of seven**

---

<sup>13</sup> This UNHCR standard of 15-20 litres per person per day is the guideline for emergency operations, and is allocated to serve all purposes, including drinking, bathing, cooking, and laundering.

<sup>14</sup> After the tragic drowning of two children in early 2001, the Nayapara Camp-in-Charge ordered the immediate closure of all wells.

It wasn't until late 2001, when Nayapara experienced an outbreak of typhoid,<sup>15</sup> when all actors agreed to an investigation. The investigation concluded that the 10-year-old system is still capable of providing enough water for the whole camp population. But the system is not used to its fullest capacity because of obstructions along the supply route (such as the absence of staff to turn on the generators).

As a result, it was agreed in December 2001 that the water points would operate four hours per day, and a monitoring committee involving refugee participation would be established. As well, additional water containers would be distributed to achieve a household storage capacity that meets daily water needs.

### **Sanitation**

Government prohibition of constructing semi-permanent structures in the camps has impacted the sanitation system. MSF in Nayapara is responsible for the construction and maintenance of latrines and bathhouses, and for refuse collection and disposal. MSF is regularly repairing the latrines and/or replacing its temporary features.<sup>16</sup> As there is no space to build new latrines, existing ones are patched up and emptied frequently. Erosion over the years has caused greater damage to the facilities.

Because the GoB was responding to an emergency in 1992, the layout of the camps did not take into account cultural sensitivities or traditional social relations that are observed by the Rohingya Muslims. The latrine units and bath houses were not designated according to sex, and their location and distance has exposed women and children to unsafe situations and compromised their privacy.

*The latrines are for both men and women. I feel ashamed to go when men are nearby.*  
– 24-year-old woman in Nayapara

*The doors are damaged, so people can see inside. I often wait until dark to go to the toilet, but it is dangerous.*  
– Teenage girl in Nayapara

Adjustments to the original camp layout have not been allowed. The government's reservations on accepting any notion of permanence has prohibited advancements to improve safety and security, accommodate traditional beliefs, and uphold international standards.

Recently, improvements in the drainage system in one part of Nayapara camp was allowed, as well as the upgrade of some latrines and bathhouses. Masonry drains are being constructed to dispose of waste water from the bathing cubicles and to collect rain water. This upgrade, though confined to only one area of Nayapara, has been recognised by a few refugees in MSF's informal survey as a change for the better after ten years (Table 12a).

As MSF steps up its efforts to promote good hygiene habits among the Nayapara refugees, it continues to urge the responsible actors to provide a sufficient supply of water. That a lack of water and a substandard sanitation system adversely affect health and hygiene is obvious. Perhaps not so clear, but equally important, is the impact on the refugees' morale and dignity.

### **Housing**

When the refugees started to flee into Bangladesh in September 1991, the government hurriedly constructed temporary shelters in the Cox's Bazar district to accommodate the arrivals. After 10 years, the sheds, or rows of 5-10 'houses,' maintain their temporary, emergency set-up character. Though they can hardly survive a monsoon season, they are repaired only every few years. In between repairs, the refugees manage by taking the doors and partitions from the latrines, or collecting stray plastic to fill in the holes.

<sup>15</sup> From September to December 2001, 55 patients were diagnosed with typhoid, compared to a total figure of 23 for the whole of 2000.

<sup>16</sup> MSF in early 2002 will handover to the GoB responsibility of maintaining the sanitation system hardware.

According to recent registration records, the average household size is 6-7 persons. The dwelling size remains constant regardless of family size. Many refugees have coped by modifying their units, dividing the 100 square foot space (9-10 square metres) into two rooms, or extending a ‘veranda’ into the passageway between sheds.



**In between two rows of sheds, Nayapara camp (Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)**

The huts, as stated by the WFP in its 1999 vulnerability report, ‘are small, crowded, and inadequate for healthy living.’<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in MSF’s January 2002 survey, housing was second only to food as a main concern for the refugees (Table 4). Most explained that the house was too small for the size of their family, and some added that privacy was a problem (Table 9).

***This house is too small for a husband and wife and children and parents and brothers and sisters. Privacy is needed, but not maintained when we all sleep and live in one room.***

**– 31-40-year-old male refugee in Nayapara, household size of eight**

The structural condition of the house is also a concern for many of the refugees, who have cited leaky plastic roofs and broken bamboo partitions as the most common problems (Table 9).

***Last rainy season, it was difficult to sleep because the ground was wet –the plastic roof was no good anymore.***

**– 21-30 year-old Kutupalong woman, household size of five**

While the housing woes of the Rohingya refugees are perhaps no worse than elsewhere in Bangladesh, it must be noted that any chance of improvement rests with the government. The authorities have consistently asserted that better living conditions would counteract their drive to repatriate.

#### **Restricted Freedoms and Opportunities**

***Our situation here is like a prison. We are not free. I wish to be a bird, free from this condition.***

**– 35-year-old Nayapara woman**

---

<sup>17</sup> WFP, “Vulnerability Survey of Refugees, September-October 1999,” July 2000, p. 15.

Since arriving in Bangladesh in 1992, the Rohingya refugees have been confined to the camps. Their freedom of movement is restricted, officially prohibiting them from seeking employment, or other activities, outside the camp.

However, in reality, a minority of refugees do engage in outside work, and several road-side-type stalls have developed inside the camps (mostly throughout Nayapara). These endeavours are only recently tolerated by the camp authorities, and it is well understood that the continuation of these illegal activities are risky and at risk. The refugees risk arrest by the local police, or punishment by the camp police if they are caught outside the camp. For some, it may be worth the risk, since a little cash is useful to supplement and diversify their food ration and to purchase goods that are not available in the ration package.

***I am afraid that if I get caught outside the camp I will be cut from the family book.***  
– 18-year-old male, Nayapara

The converse is equally interesting, in that the majority of refugee families do not have an outside income, and are essentially dependent on rations. This not only has a significant impact on the nutritional status of the refugees as discussed above, but also on morale. It is common knowledge that gainful employment fosters a sense of self-worth and reliance. And in a society in which the male role is clearly defined as family provider, the unemployed Rohingya man finds his social and economic value degraded, and his capacities and potential squandered.

***I prefer to work. We just sit, idly, and get handout rations. I don't feel good.***  
– 55-year-old refugee man in Kutupalong

The Rohingya refugee woman, traditionally restricted to the homestead, is typically consumed with domestic duties, such as cooking, child care, and fetching water. But even for them, the restrictions on movement affect their mental well-being and their quality of life.

***If my husband could work, then at least once a week I could give fish and potatoes to my children.***  
– 25-year-old woman, Nayapara

Several refugees –men and women –told MSF in its January 2002 survey that the restrictions on movement is a chief concern for them, as well as, by extension, the lack of money and work (Table 4). Many explained that they are bored and restless, and feel confined. For some, working productively and earning an income was a hope for the near future, and it didn't matter where (Table 13).

***I just want to work. I want to use my hands again. I used to be a carpenter with my brother in Burma.***  
– 21-30-year-old man, Kutupalong

A 10-year confinement can have particularly harmful effects on children and youth. Unlike some of the adults, children cannot pay their way out of the camp. So for many youngsters, especially those born in the camps (i.e. all those under 10, which account for 39 percent of the total camp population<sup>18</sup>), the “boundaries of the camp are the boundaries of their world.”<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Food Economy Group/WFP 2001, p. 8

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Feeny, “Rohingya Refugee Children in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh,” 2001, p. 26.



Children in Nayapara camp. (Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)

*I have no friends in the villages. We have no chance: we cannot go out. But I would like to have friends.*

– 12-year-old boy, Nayapara camp

#### **Education and Self-Help Activities**

Many refugee parents expressed their satisfaction with the recent opening of schools (Table 12a). Because the government had asserted that the refugee presence was brief, educational programmes were considered unnecessary and therefore prohibited. For the first five years, refugee children were denied their right to basic (non-religious) education.<sup>20</sup> It was not until mid-1996 that the GoB allowed formal schooling in some camps. But in Nayapara, it wasn't until January 2000 when the children could start school.

The education levels provided are kindergarten to class five. For learning beyond the primary levels, casual adolescent and adult learner courses have been started for those who wish to maintain their basic literacy and arithmetic skills. However, enrolment in these programmes are quite low: in 2001, only 27 adolescent girls and 24 adolescent boys were registered. Many young people do not attend these courses because, as one young man stated, I am not learning anything new. A lack of motivation is another factor: *I have no chance for higher education, here or in Burma. So what's the point?* The low enrolment figures notwithstanding, several refugees told MSF that continuing education and skills training courses are useful, not only to fill their time in the present, but to create opportunities for the future (see Tables 13 and 14).

WFP has instituted a few vocational training programmes, targeting particularly refugee women and girls. Net-weaving, sewing/tailoring, and making school bags are a few of the 'Self-Help Activities.' Although enrolment remains low (there was a total of 73 women registered in 2001), these activities have received widespread approval from the refugees, and are considered a major improvement in camp life after 10 years (Table 12a).

---

<sup>20</sup> But small groups of informal instruction, led by refugees teachers, developed independently. Some international NGOs stepped in to assist financially, however minimal the resources. Islamic teaching (or madrassahs) was allowed since the beginning.

For those youngsters that are not preoccupied with any of the above pursuits, boredom and restlessness quickly and inevitably set in. Some elder refugees believe that inactive, idle youth are responsible for some of the antisocial or destructive behaviour they've encountered. One 55-year-old Nayapara woman advised: The UNHCR should provide jobs and other occupations to keep the young boys busy and away from the young girls.

But these hard-won education and vocational schemes are possibly under threat of closure as part of a UNHCR repatriation revival plan announced in early 2002, since these activities are also deemed 'stay' factors by the Government of Bangladesh.

***My little brother goes to school. But for me it is not possible. When I'm not praying. . . [He picks up a reed fan and waves it dispassionately.] . . . this is what I am doing the whole day.***

– 18-year-old refugee boy, Nayapara

***My daughter wants to learn more, but there is no library here. And I do not have money to buy her books.***

– 31-40-year-old father from Kutupalong, referring to his 14-year-old daughter

## REPATRIATION

***Woman 1: I am happy here in Bangladesh. I am grateful to Bangladesh for giving us shelter. In Burma, we could not sleep because we were always afraid.***

***Woman 2: I cannot sleep soundly here: I am afraid they will come any minute and make me go back. We have no money; my husband cannot work. We are like prisoners here.***

– Two refugee women in their 30s in Nayapara camp

The Rohingya repatriation programme under the supervision of the UNHCR has, over its 10-year operation, passed through many stages, during which the voluntary nature of the exercise has often been criticised as questionable at best, or in violation of international laws at worst. Continued abuses in Myanmar, GoB determination to send them back, and pressures from all sides on the UNHCR account for a highly problematic and controversial operation.

Shortly after their arrival, the refugees as a group were accorded prima facie refugee status, which entitled them to protection and assistance in Bangladesh under international law.

The governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in April 1992, which set the repatriation programme in motion. The UNHCR was permitted to operate on the Bangladeshi side of the border and Myanmar would involve the UNHCR only 'as needed at an appropriate time.' Hence, there was no UNHCR presence in Myanmar to receive the refugees and monitor their safety.

Although both Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed in the MOU that 'repatriation should be safe and voluntary,' signs of forced repatriation reminiscent of 1978 were quite apparent when repatriation started in September 1992. According to human rights and NGO situation reports, at least 15 refugees were killed in clashes with camp police; family books were confiscated; and hundreds were beaten and/or detained.<sup>21</sup> In protest of the GoB's actions, the UNHCR withdrew in December 1992, by which time up to 15,000 Rohingyas were returned.

By May 1993, the GoB finally accepted a formal agreement with the UNHCR. The MOU authorised the UNHCR to carry out two important components of its mandate: protection of the refugees in the camps, and voluntary repatriation, guaranteed by private, individual interviewing. The MOU stood as a formal

---

<sup>21</sup> From USCR 1995; Asia Watch September 1992; and internal communications.

acknowledgement of the principles of ‘voluntariness’ of return and non-refoulement, or the right not to be forcibly returned to a situation which would endanger one’s life or freedom.<sup>22</sup> These guarantees notwithstanding, threats, beatings, and family book confiscation persisted,<sup>23</sup> and by November 1993, another 35,000 refugees had been returned and three camps closed.

***We were with nine in my family. Six were repatriated by force by the camp police. They took my wife, our two children, my brother, father, and mother. My two brothers and I were somewhere else in the camp when our family was taken.***

**– 32-year-old male in Nayapara**

That same month, the Myanmar government finally agreed to an MOU with the UNHCR. The agreement stated that the refugees would be able to return to their places of origin and be issued appropriate identification papers. It also assured the returnees ‘the same freedom of movement as all other nationals in Rakhine State’; and it ensured UNHCR’s access to all returnees to monitor their reintegration.<sup>24</sup>

Having secured a presence in Myanmar, the UNHCR launched a large-scale mass repatriation programme in December 1993, with the objective of repatriating the remaining 190,000 refugees by December 1995. The UNHCR shifted its approach in July 1994, from information sessions to promotion sessions, and from private interviewing to mass registration. Although the UNHCR had gained limited access to Rakhine State only four months before, it declared that the situation in Myanmar was conducive to return, and that the refugees wanted to return.

MSF and other international NGOs (Oxfam, Concern, and Save the Children-UK) shared misgivings about the refugees’ understanding of the consequences of registering. As a result, MSF led an awareness survey in March 1995, and found that 63percent of the 412 families interviewed did not want to be repatriated, and that 65percent were not aware of the possibility to refuse repatriation.

The December 1995 deadline to close the relief operation came and went. By 1996, refugee reluctance to return home was reinforced as increasing numbers of Rohingyas, including those previously repatriated, were leaving Rakhine for Bangladesh with stories of persistent abuse back home. At the same time, repatriation continued.

***My brother was repatriated in 1995, but he came back after eight months because life was still no good. He said he had no money because the soldiers made him work for them, and they made many problems for the people.***

**– 20-year-old woman in Kutupalong**

Aggression reached a height in mid-July 1997, when 350 refugees – mostly women and children –were rounded up overnight at gunpoint and deported. This set off a 14-month long strike in Nayapara by the refugees, involving some militant elements, in which the refugees took over the camps and boycotted humanitarian services. MSF was eventually allowed back in the camp, but other agencies were still barred. By October 1998, Bangladeshi security forces regained control in the camps, and arrested

---

<sup>22</sup> The terms of the MOU are significant, as Bangladesh has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, in which the rights of refugees are enshrined, nor does it have a national asylum law in place.

<sup>23</sup> USCR, ‘The Return of the Rohingya Refugees to Burma: Voluntary Repatriation or Refoulement?’ 1995, pp. 6-8; and internal communications.

<sup>24</sup> On the issuance of identification papers, the returnees were in fact issued temporary registration cards, which denotes the bearer as Muslim and therefore not entitled to claim citizenship; on freedom of movement, restrictions were not lifted, but have tightened in recent years; and regarding UNHCR access, free access to all areas of Rakhine State was not achieved until the end of 1994.

hundreds of male refugees, many of whom remain in prison today.<sup>25</sup> Throughout this period, repatriation was halted.

***One night, a camp policeman came in our room with a gun and demanded our family books and ordered us to go. They were taking us to the transit camp then back to Burma. But we did not want to go back. I told the soldier that I must look for my son first. They grabbed my wife and younger child and made them go.***

– Male refugee from Kutupalong

***They were forcing us to go back to Burma. They took the men, including my husband, to jail because we refused to take our rations. The UNHCR has tried to bring back my husband. He is in jail with about 100 to 200 other Rohingya refugees. I have not heard from him in three months.***

– Female refugee, 20-25 years old, Nayapara

Repatriation resumed in November 1998, but the Myanmar authorities had introduced a new set of restrictive, bureaucratic conditions and procedures, much to the consternation of the Bangladeshi authorities. Myanmar also refused to accept 7,000 previously ‘cleared’<sup>26</sup> refugees, and embarked on a new round of re-verification. Since then, repatriation has slowed to a trickle, with only 454 families (2,740 individuals) sent home between January 1999 and December 2001.<sup>27</sup>

Myanmar’s complicated system of clearance not only displeases the GoB, but also deprives those ‘uncleared’ Rohingyas willing to go home of their right to return.

***I want to go as soon as I’m cleared. In Burma, we suffered, but here I am also suffering. Most of my family has already been sent back. I have to be cleared, or they will arrest me when I try to re-enter.***

– Refugee woman in Kutupalong camp, 21-30 years old

In early 2002, the Myanmar authorities verbally agreed to accept approximately 5,000 cleared refugees. Among them, according to the UNHCR, the majority are prepared to return home. The remainder have attached conditions to their return.<sup>28</sup>

***I want to go back to Burma, but only when there is peace. If Burma promises to stop the torture, then I’ll go back. Otherwise, I must stay. I’ll die here if necessary.***

– 45-year-old male refugee, Nayapara

Since Myanmar’s verbal agreement, the UNHCR laid out its plans to revive the repatriation programme. It promised the GoB to engage in counselling and information sessions and to re-evaluate some programmes perceived to be disincentives to returning (such as skills training activities).

## **PROTECTION**

***Sometimes I don’t feel safe in the camp. But it is safer than Burma.***

– Refugee woman in her twenties, Kutupalong

The 1993 MOU between the UNHCR and GoB stipulated that the government was primarily responsible for ‘safety and security for the Myanmar refugees in the camps and outside. . . . and the UNHCR is here

<sup>25</sup> From MSF-Holland, “Better off in Burma,” 1997; Human Rights Watch/Asia & Refugees International, 1997; Amnesty International, 1997; and internal communications. Among those arrested were those considered to be trusted figures in the refugee community, who would often communicate their concerns to the international agencies.

<sup>26</sup> “Clearance” is the time-consuming process by which the Myanmar immigration authorities verify the identity and residency claim (home village) of the prospective returnee. Most Rohingya refugees had been stripped of their identity documents or left them behind before fleeing to Bangladesh.

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR Repatriation Statistics.

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR, presented at a briefing for donors, February 2002.



to assist the GoB for these purposes and for discharging its international protection mandate.’ The UNHCR’s protection mandate requires it to guard the population against violence, intimidation, and threats to security, as well as making sure they are not discriminated in the enjoyment of any basic right, including access to services and institutions. The UNHCR –working against the GoB’s resolve to return the refugees as soon as possible –has frequently found its functions hampered or conflicted, and the principle of protection, like voluntariness, compromised.

The experiences of violence and coercion over the years has inevitably fostered a climate of fear and distress among the refugees. In MSF’s January 2002 survey, more than half the surveyed population said they sometimes or always felt unsafe in the camps (Table 11). Although some refugees told MSF that life in the camp was better overall because forced repatriation had stopped or decreased in recent months (Table 12a), others told of a different menace that had made conditions worse for them: aggression from the *majee*<sup>29</sup> and/or local population (Table 12b).



**Armed security in Nayapara camp (Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)**

To facilitate the authorities’ duty of maintaining law and order, the refugees are not permitted beyond the confines of the camp, nor technically are ‘visitors’ permitted inside the camp. However, over 10 years, as needs have dictated, ways and means of circumventing these policies have developed, involving the (often paid) cooperation and tolerance of the authorities. Certainly, these ways are not without risk.

***We are afraid to move outside the camp. I’m afraid the police will arrest me, or they’ll take my family book.***

**– 25-year-old male refugee, Nayapara**

If the refugees manage to get outside the camp, they are then vulnerable to harassment by the residents and/or authorities of the villages surrounding the camps. Many refugees stated in MSF’s survey that they were afraid because the village police and/or more often the village residents would harass them (Table 11a).

***I fetch firewood from the forest. But the villagers take our tools until we give money or some wood.***

**– Teenage boy from Kutupalong**

About one-fifth of the refugees explained that they felt unsafe due to a fear of punishment by the *majee*,

<sup>29</sup> The *majee* is a male refugee selected by the Camp-in-Charge to oversee security matters in a block of sheds. The *majee* is the link between the population and the camp authorities, and first in the hierarchical line of authority to whom the refugees may refer. He is not officially paid for his duties.

camp police, or Camp-in-Charge (CiC).<sup>30</sup> Punishment came in the forms of beatings, threats, arrests, ‘fines,’ and confiscation of the family book, most commonly as a result of leaving the camp (and failing to pay the gate guards or other authority) or harbouring someone not on the family book. Other respondents explained their fear in the camps was due to general, often unwarranted intimidation by the camp authorities. *The majee has destroyed the environment of the camp*, stated a 15- to 20-year-old female refugee in Nayapara.

Among the refugees who said they did not feel safe, most indicated that they had reported their safety-related problems to a camp official, the UNHCR, or to MSF or Concern (Table 11c). Among those who did not report their grievance, half expressed a fear of reprisals or a backlash by the authorities (Table 11d). *I’m afraid I will get more problems, or they will take away my ration [family book]*, explained one Nayapara woman. Another commented that the refugees are not supposed to leave the camp, so filing a complaint, especially against a villager, is tantamount to a confession of violating the rules.

As well, the refugees explained that they expected an unfair response on a complaint, if any at all, from the authorities or the UNHCR. One Kutupalong refugee explained, *Whoever we inform, we are told that we are refugees, or we’re foreigners here, and that we’re not entitled to justice. They don’t listen to our complaints. It’s like they’re deaf and we’re dumb.* In fact, for a few refugees, it was this reason that accounted for their feeling of insecurity in the camps: that the local population, local police, and camp officials could carry out offensive acts with impunity (Table 11a).

*No, I do not feel safe in the camp. I am especially afraid for our young girls.*  
– Woman refugee in Kutupalong, in her thirties

The security situation for Rohingya women and girls is particularly precarious. Rape and sexual violence by the Myanmar military was a major cause of the 1991-92 exodus. Now, in the refugee camp setting, women and girls are still at risk of sexual violence, abduction, and even trafficking.<sup>31</sup> In MSF’s survey, many respondents stated that they fear for the safety of their female relatives (Table 11a). Some explained that the distance and placement of the latrines, bath houses, and water sources undermined their privacy and security, and poorly lit camps made their movement in the evening perilous.

*I am worried for my teenage daughter’s security. The latrines are far, and there are many men around.*  
– Nayapara male, 31-40 years old

The number of actual incidents of sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls are anticipated to be higher than the number of reported incidents. *When a girl is raped, you cannot tell anyone, explained a Kutupalong woman, because it is too shameful. We go for help [for physical wounds] to a traditional birth attendant.* There are other reasons not to report cases of rape or assault, including the fear of repercussions and the belief that the matter will not be solved (Table 11d).

---

<sup>30</sup> The CiC is the government authority in charge of the refugees’ overall welfare, the camp’s administration, and law and order. He is assigned by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.

<sup>31</sup> See Images Asia, “Trafficked from Hell to Hades: The Plight of Rohingya Women from Burma Trafficked in Pakistan,” November 1999, which states that the refugee camps were ideal recruiting grounds for traffickers.



*Rohingya women in Nayapara camp (Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)*

Many incidents of aggression against the refugees occur while they are in the forested areas around the camps collecting firewood. The UNHCR does supply compressed rice husk to be used as fuel instead of firewood. But the refugees complain that the amounts distributed are too small for their needs, and therefore must compensate by fetching wood from the forests (Tables 10 and 10a).

*The firewood usually lasts 15 days. Most times I send my child or husband to the forest to fetch wood or dry leaves, but it is dangerous: there are robbers, or the villagers or forest ranger demand money from us. They sometimes take our tools or beat us until we pay. But we don't have money to pay.*

**– 21-30-year-old refugee woman in Kutupalong**

In a separate alarming development, the births of 130 children in Nayapara camp, 120 of which are under five, are not registered. The camp authorities are responsible for registering children's births and issuing birth certificates. However, for a number of reasons, this has not been the case for all children. The absence of registration affects not only the newborn's right to food and other items as a refugee, but also the very existence of the child: without record as a refugee, the child may be left behind if the parent is repatriated, or the parent may be denied clearance by the Myanmar authorities. Equally worrisome is the risk of child trafficking, which is made all the easier by the lack of traceable identification documents. After lengthy discussions, the government agreed to register the births of all refugee babies. But, to date, MSF has observed that many infants and children still have yet to be documented.

These situations have many serious implications for the protection rights of the refugees. The prevalence of beatings, threats, extortion, and arrests over the 10 years – either as coercive measures to prompt repatriation or as means to other ends – underlines the need for an ongoing discussion on how UNHCR interprets its protection role.

*I have reported [my problem] five times to the UNHCR. In my eyes, the UNHCR and the majee and the police are the same.*

**– 45-50-year-old female in Kutupalong**

## **NEW ARRIVALS**

Since the mass exodus of 1991-92, a steady stream of Rakhine Muslims continues to cross the Naf River and flow into Bangladesh. This peaked during the first halves of 1996 and 1997, when it was reported that at least 15,000 entered the country. It is known that many of the new arrivals are 'reverse cases,' or those who were previously repatriated. These Rohingyas are grouped collectively as 'new arrivals,' and live thinly scattered among the population of Cox's Bazar and the Bandarban areas. Estimates of the undocumented Rohingya living in the communities vary widely, ranging from 10,000 to 200,000.

The GoB has declared all Rohingyas arriving after the start of repatriation in 1992 to be illegal immigrants.<sup>32</sup> As such, they are denied access to the refugee camps. Nevertheless, some do enter in the hopes of reuniting with family and/or benefiting from refugee protection and assistance.

The Rohingya new arrivals cross into Bangladesh both to escape human rights abuses and for economic reasons. In a 1998 survey conducted among new arrivals in Bangladesh by UBINIG, a local policy research organisation, 158 out of the 200 families interviewed indicated that they left Myanmar because of “army torture.” Also, 32 families explained that they had problems searching for work, and the remaining 10 said they had experienced “general insecurity.”<sup>33</sup>

According to the findings of an independent researcher who interviewed more than 40 undocumented Rohingyas in 2001, a lack of food triggered the departure of roughly 80 percent of the respondents. The lack of food stemmed mainly from forced labour, land confiscation, and unemployment. Restrictions on their movement precluded them from searching for employment – already scarce – elsewhere in Rakhine.<sup>34</sup>

Many Rohingyas may have no choice but to stay in Bangladesh, for fear of arrest upon return to Rakhine by the authorities on charges of “illegal exit.” If a Muslim stays beyond his/her authorised period of leave, he/she is subject to arrest and/or heavy fines upon return. Even if they are prepared to pay the penalties, they might find that their names have been scratched from the official ‘family list,’ subjecting them and their families to arrest for false identity or unlawful residence.

The GoB contends that the ‘new arrivals’ are economic migrants and therefore do not have a claim of persecution by the Myanmar government. As a result, they are not eligible for refugee status. The UNHCR has not challenged this contention. However, an analysis of the humanitarian condition of the Muslims in Rakhine State would reveal a correlation between poverty and persecution. As mentioned above, the Rohingya population in Rakhine State suffers from restrictions on the freedom of movement, forced labour, excessive taxes, and land confiscation. Amidst this setting, their economic status deteriorates to the point that they must find opportunities elsewhere. Thus, it can be argued that the economic reasons for coming to Bangladesh have political roots.

The continuous trickle of new arrivals is a worrisome sign about the situation of the Muslims in Rakhine State. It can be expected that the Rohingya Muslims will continue to come to Bangladesh as long as they continue to be marginalised at home – economically, politically, and socially.

---

<sup>32</sup> The Bangladeshi government officially closed the camps to arrivals in late May 1992, and UNHCR registration of the refugees was completed by September 1992.

<sup>33</sup> UBINIG, “Vulnerability and Insecurity: A Study on the Situation of Rohingya Women and Children in Cox’s Bazar and Teknaf,” August 1998, pp. 23-4.

<sup>34</sup> As of yet unpublished documentation.

## AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

*After 10 years, I am still a refugee here. After 10 years, there is still no peace in Burma, there is still no change. How can I fulfil my dreams like this?*

– Refugee woman in her thirties, Kutupalong

10 years on and the Rohingyas still lack a remedy for their situation. The nearly 22,000 remaining refugees have come to be known collectively as ‘the residual caseload,’ left over due to their reluctance to return to what caused them to flee in the first place, and due to a protracted clearance process by the Myanmar authorities.

Although refugees have three possible solutions to their situation – repatriation, integration in the host country, and resettlement in a third country – the Rohingya refugees do not seem to have a choice. Repatriation has been promoted as the most optimal solution by the UNHCR, and as the only solution by the Government of Bangladesh.

As for the refugees, their eventual return in principle is not a point of contention. Many have expressed their desire to return; at issue is when. According to MSF’s January 2002 survey, a large majority of the refugees said they wanted to go back when they were granted Myanmar citizenship, or when peace, freedom and/or democracy was achieved in

Myanmar (Table 13). Only six out of 118 respondents expressed a wish not to return.



**A Rohingya refugee man  
(Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)**

*We need the Burma government to recognise us as their people and to declare us as citizens. That is the beginning. And then I would go back.*

– Refugee man in Nayapara, 40 years old

*I don’t ever want to go back to Burma. I don’t even want to hear the word Burma ever again. The soldiers killed my father in front of my eyes, and look what they did to my leg ... and my ribs... .*

– Refugee man in Nayapara, 35 years old

*I will never return because there will never be peace in Burma. So I have no hopes for the future.*

– Refugee woman in Kutupalong, over 45 years old

The UNHCR is reactivating its repatriation programme, proclaiming the situation in Myanmar as conducive to the refugees’ return, and affirming its ability to monitor the safety of the returnees. In principle, it is the refugee who decides whether it is safe to return. This must be guaranteed in practice.

The human rights situation in Rakhine State has not changed, but has by some accounts deteriorated. Human rights reports, the testimonies of new arrivals, and witness accounts in Rakhine attest that conditions that triggered the exodus 11 years ago exist today. Restricted movement, excessive taxation, and violence and intimidation continue to prompt departures and hinder the reintegration of those who have returned. It is clear that as long as the Myanmar government refuses to respect the basic rights of the Muslims, they would always remain a vulnerable group.

*It is necessary for the laws of Burma to change, for us to be granted citizenship, and for my father’s land to be returned. Then we can live there in peace.*

– 19-year-old refugee male, Nayapara

The UNHCR's access to the returnee population in northern Rakhine State remains limited and its ability to carry out its protection duties restricted. In this regard, it can be argued that mere monitoring does not ensure safety, nor will it stimulate a fundamental change in the political circumstances.

Even so, the presence of the UNHCR and other international organisations in northern Rakhine State has played a positive role in addressing the needs for rehabilitation and reconstruction. Economic and social development projects work to upgrade the quality of life, while the UNHCR has attempted to engage the authorities in a dialogue on the underlying causes of poverty, such as citizenship and forced labour. However, little progress has been made.

The UNHCR in both Bangladesh and Myanmar have been under pressure since 1997 to cut costs, scale back, and eventually close operations. The absence of the UNHCR in northern Rakhine would be cause for great concern, as it is currently the only international organisation present with the mandate for and expertise in protection and monitoring.

The Bangladeshi government has unequivocally rejected the second possibility of local integration for the remaining refugees. Bangladesh is a highly populated country with numerous economic and social concerns, and very limited resources. It has come to view the refugees as environmental and economic burdens,<sup>35</sup> social hazards in the villages, and breeders of Islamic militancy.<sup>36</sup> It has impeded or rejected efforts to improve the humanitarian conditions in the camps for fear that they serve as disincentives to return. It fears that granting permanent asylum to the refugees will act as a "pull factor" and attract more Rohingyas into Bangladesh.

The last option for the refugees – third-country resettlement – currently enjoys little to no support from the international community.

***Myanmar is not good and it will not improve. If I could get support, I would hope to go to another country. Then I would like to work independently, to be able to support my family.***

**– Refugee man in Nayapara, 32 years old**

It is argued that the international community is duty-bound to share the responsibility of protecting the remaining refugees, by considering to accept at least some refugees for resettlement in their respective countries; by placing adequate pressure on the Government of Myanmar to remove the conditions that caused their flight; and by providing adequate funds to the UNHCR to increase, not concede, its protection functions.

A combination of options for mid- or long-term remedies have been posed: temporary protected status/residence in Bangladesh; third-country resettlement for some and host-country integration for others; and the status quo, with improvements in the camp's humanitarian and security sectors.

In the humanitarian realm, at the time of writing, the future is equally uncertain. UNHCR's announcement to intensify repatriation exercises may lead to the reduction or removal of many social activities in the camps.

Similarly, the security situation also remains a cause for concern. Even though a number of refugees told MSF that life in the camp was better overall because forced repatriation had stopped or decreased (Table 12a), intimidation by camp authorities and the local population continues unabated.

The UNHCR recently announced the movement of 5,000 "cleared" refugees and their families from Nayapara to Kutupalong to engage them in counselling and information sessions for repatriation. The

---

<sup>35</sup> It must be noted that the UNHCR is bearing most of the financial cost of operating the Rohingya refugee programme.

<sup>36</sup> Gathered from newspaper articles over the 10-year period.

move, explained by the UNHCR, will also separate the refugees from influential “anti-repatriation elements.” The 5,000 includes refugees who have declared their unwillingness to repatriate.

***My main concern is my future... .***

**– 14-year-old girl in Kutupalong**

The future weighs heavily on the minds of the refugees. The Rohingyas, first as non-citizens and now as refugees, never seemed to have enjoyed self-determination, or the right to make their own choices. Instead, their future is being determined by powers that do not have a stake in their welfare as individuals or a group. It brings to mind a 19-year-old boy’s feeling that he is “caught between a crocodile and a snake.”

**My future depends on you [the international community]. I cannot do anything. I can only wait and see. But I want my voice to be heard.**

**– 21-30-year-old woman in Nayapara**

**As Rohingya refugees, we are like a football: kicked this way and that.**

**– Nayapara male refugee**

The Bangladeshi government strives to send them back; the Myanmar government strives to keep them out; and the refugees are caught in the middle. Until a political breakthrough is achieved, intermediate and long-term solutions must be sought for those refugees unwilling to return to Myanmar.

In the meantime, the mothers and fathers and sons and daughters who comprise the Rohingya refugees continue to cope with their traumas, struggle with their confinement, and treasure their hopes for a peaceful future. They need assistance and protection. And they need their voices to be heard.

***Government of Burma says, ‘This is not your land.’ Government of Bangladesh says, ‘This is not your land.’ So I ask you; I ask UNHCR; I ask Bangladesh; and Burma to please tell me, where do I belong? Where is my home? Where can I go? I do not want to be a refugee anymore. I just want to live in peace.***

**– Kutupalong male refugee, 50 years old**



**A Rohingya refugee boy (Herman Smitskamp, MSF, 2001)**

## REFERENCES

- Abrar, C. R. "Repatriation of Rohingya Refugees." Paper presented at UNHCR's Regional Consultation on Refugee and Migratory Movements, Colombo, September 1995.
- Amnesty International. "Rohingyas: The Search for Safety." AI Index: ASA 13/07/97, September 1997.
- Asia Watch. "Bangladesh: Abuse of Burmese Refugees from Arakan." Vol. 5, No. 17, 9 October 1993.
- Asia Watch. "Burma: Rape, Forced Labour and Religious Persecution in Northern Arakan." Vol. 4, No. 13, May 1992.
- Asia Watch. "Changes in Burma?" Vol. 4, Issue 24, 6 September 1992.
- Barnett, Michael. "UNHCR and Involuntary Repatriation: Environmental Developments, the Repatriation Culture, and the Rohingya Refugees." Paper submitted to the International Studies Association, Los Angeles, March 2000.
- Concern. "DRAFT Nutrition Survey in Kutpalong and Nayapara I and II Refugee Camps among the Rohingya Refugees, Cox's Bazaar/Teknaf, Bangladesh." November 2001.
- Concern. "Report on Food Security, Health and Nutrition in the Rohingya Camps." January 2001.
- Feeny, Thomas. "Rohingya Refugee Children in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh." Draft discussion document for UNICEF, May 2001.
- Food Economy Group. "Report of an Explorative Study of Food Security Issues Amongst Rohingya Refugees in Camps in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, May 2001." Consultancy for WFP, June 2001.
- Helen Keller International. "Nutritional Surveillance in the Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox's Bazar: Results of 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Data Collection." December 1992.
- Human Rights Watch/Asia. "Burma: The Rohingya Muslims – Ending a Cycle of Exodus?" Vol. 8, No. 9, September 1996.
- Human Rights Watch/Asia. "Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution." Vol. 12, No. 3, May 2000.
- Human Rights Watch/Asia & Refugees International. "Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: The Search for a Lasting Solution." Vol. 9, No. 7, August 1997.
- Lewa, Chris. "The Rohingya: Forced Migration and Statelessness." Paper submitted to the Centre of Refugee Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, February 2001.
- MSF-France/Holland. "Awareness Survey of the Rohingya Refugee Camps." March 1995.
- MSF-Holland. "Better Off in Burma? The Plight of the Burmese Rohingyas." November 1997.
- MSF. "MSF's Concerns on the Repatriation of Rohingya Refugees from Bangladesh to Burma." London, May 1995.
- MSF-Holland. "Nutritional Survey in Nayapara Camp, Teknaf, Bangladesh." November 2000.



- Oxfam (UK & Ireland). "Protection to Refugees: Case of Rohingya Women." Paper presented at a Seminar on Refugees, Migrants, and Stateless Persons, Dhaka, 29 December 1997.
- Petrasek, David. "Through Rose-Coloured Glasses: UNHCR's Role in Monitoring the Safety of the Rohingya Refugees Returning to Burma." (Written in his personal capacity.) March 1998.
- Save the Children Fund-UK. "Case Study on Repatriation of Rohingya Refugees from Bangladesh." 1998.
- Smith, Martin. *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Zed Books: London, 2000.
- UBINIG. "Vulnerability and Insecurity: Study on the Situation of Rohingya Women and Children in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf." August 1998.
- UNHCR. *Handbook on Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection*. UNHCR: Geneva, 1996.
- U.S. Committee for Refugees. "The Return of the Rohingya Refugees to Burma: Voluntary Repatriation or *Refoulement*?" Washington, D.C., 1995.
- WFP. "Vulnerability Survey of Refugees from the Rakhine State of Myanmar in Bangladesh, September-October 1999." July 2000.

## ANNEX I

### RESULTS OF SURVEY

An informal survey was conducted in mid-January 2002 in Nayapara and Kutupalong camps. It involved the participation of staff from Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland and Concern. The survey was carried out with the approval of relevant government authorities.

The objective of the survey was to gather information on the needs, concerns, and wishes of the refugees, as they relate to their humanitarian and future situation. The nature of the questions dealt with their present conditions and future hopes. See Annex II for the Questionnaire. The interviewers were instructed to keep the questions open-ended to avoid inducing the respondent to fit the answer in one or more of the possible responses listed in the questionnaire.

Selection of the respondents in each block of each camp was random, and analysis of the data did not rely on scientific, statistical methodologies. The responses of 118 refugees – 59 in each camp – were recorded. For some questions, more than one response was possible.

#### Profile of Respondents

Camp	Male	Female	No. of Respondents
Nayapara	31	28	59
Kutupalong	30	29	59
Total	61	57	118

Table 1. Age range of respondents

Age Range	Nayapara Camp		Kutupalong Camp		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
< 15	0	0	0	1	1
15-20	3	8	3	6	20
21-30	11	11	7	11	40
31-40	10	7	12	10	39
≥ 41	6	2	8	1	17
Unknown	1	0	0	0	1

Table 2. How many family members live in your house?

Range of family members	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
2 – 4	5	6	11
5 – 7	22	17	39
8 – 10	16	22	38
11 – 13	10	11	21
12 – 15	3	3	6
> 15	3	0	3

**Table 3. Number of living children born in the camp**

Range of births	Nayapara		Kutupalong		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
0-1	3	6	7	8	24
2-3	18	11	12	11	52
4-5	8	9	10	10	37
6-7	2	1	1	0	4
> 8	0	1	0	0	1

**Table 4. What are your main concerns in the camp?**

Concerns	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Food	46	45	91
Housing (condition and size of house)	29	34	63
Clothing	9	21	30
Restricted Movement	12	17	29
Firewood	14	12	26
Water	22	0	22
Mosquito nets	5	14	19
Blankets	5	12	17
Harassment by camp police	4	9	13
Health care	3	8	11
No money	3	7	10
Harassment <sup>a</sup> by villagers	2	7	9
Harassment by <i>majee</i> <sup>b</sup>	4	5	9
Employment	3	4	7
Safety, especially for women	6	0	6
Marriage for daughter/son	2	3	5
Absent husband <sup>c</sup>	2	2	4
No recreation for children	3	1	4
Education	0	3	3
Bath place, especially for women	1	2	3
Forced Repatriation	0	2	2
Ban on visitors	1	1	2
Kerosene	0	2	2
Latrines	0	2	2
None	1	1	2
“My future” <sup>d</sup>	0	1	1

<sup>a</sup> ‘Harassment’ is inclusive of extortion of money and property (mainly firewood), beatings, and regular intimidation.

<sup>b</sup> The *majee* is a male refugee selected by the camp administration (the Camp-in-Charge) to watch over the security and general condition of a group of sheds or a whole block. He is the first point person in the line of the authorities.

<sup>c</sup> Due to death, imprisonment, estrangement, repatriation.

<sup>f</sup> The main concern of the 14-year-old respondent.

**Table 5a. Do you have enough water to meet your daily needs?**

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Yes	12	50	62
No	32	7	39
Sometimes	15	2	17

**Table 5b. If you don't or sometimes have enough water, why? (n=56)**

Reason	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Water taps are not open long enough	36	0	36
Insufficient containers	25	3	28
Short supply of water in the tanks	27	0	27
Short supply of tube wells	0	4	4
Water pumps are too far	0	2	2
Damaged tube wells	0	2	2

**Table 5c. How do you compensate for the insufficient water supply? (n=56)**

Action	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Go to another source*	26	2	28
Dig pond (in camp)	21	0	21
Get from villagers	5	1	6
No answer	3	3	6
Get from other refugees	4	0	4
Nothing	2	1	3
Wait in line	0	1	1
Go to other pump in camp	0	1	1

\* The hills, stream, or pond outside the camp.

**Table 6a. Do you use the latrines?**

Use	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Always*	47	50	97
Never	0	1	1
Sometimes	12	8	20

\* Several respondents who always used the latrines added that, even though they found the latrines problematic, they had no alternative.

**Table 6b. If you never or sometimes use the latrines, why? (n=21)**

Reason	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Too dirty	8	4	12
Not private	4	6	10
Too far	2	3	5
Unisex	2	1	3
Long lines	2	0	2
Get clogged often	0	1	1
No answer	0	1	1

**Table 7a. Do you have enough food for two meals for the whole family?**

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Always*	8	2	10
Never	27	30	57
Sometimes	24	27	51

\* Five respondents qualified their response by saying that they had enough for just two meals, but not for more.

**Table 7b. If you do not or sometimes have enough food, why? (n=108)**

Reason	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Small quantity for family size	41	49	90
Sell/trade ration for other foods/items	18	19	37
Distributors keep an amount for themselves	15	12	27
Sell ration for cash	9	8	17
Theft	2	3	5
Debt (borrow and pay back)	1	1	2
Delays in distribution	0	1	1

**Table 8. What is your source of health care?**

Health care provider <sup>a</sup>	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
MoH clinic	54	58	112
MSF (in Nayapara only)	55	n/a	55
Concern (in Kutupalong only)	n/a	54	54
Provider in the village	7	9	16
Refugee 'doctor' <sup>b</sup>	2	0	2

<sup>a</sup> The target populations for MSF and Concern are children under 10, pregnant and lactating women, and women practicing family planning; the Ministry of Health is responsible for the remainder of the registered refugee population.

<sup>b</sup> Probably an MSF or Concern-trained CHW or traditional medicine practitioner.

**Table 8a. Are you generally satisfied with the health services you received?**

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Yes	27	19	46
No	25	34	59
Sometimes	7	6	13

**Table 8b. If you are not or sometimes satisfied with the health care services, why? (n=72)**

Reason	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Improper medical treatment* by MOH	25	29	54
MOH doctor is disrespectful	4	17	21
Improper treatment* by Concern/MSF	2	3	5
Insufficient or no drug supply at MOH	4	1	5
Insufficient or no drug supply at Concern/MSF	1	2	3
Must pay to get referral to an outside hospital	1	2	3
Long wait	2	0	2
Concern/MSF is disrespectful	0	1	1
MOH demands payments for services	0	1	1

\* Examples include incomplete examination, ineffective medication, insufficient dosages, incorrect diagnoses, inattention to common ailments, and the failure to administer treatment according to the needs. These claims are questionable at best, and cannot be confirmed.

**Table 9. Condition of house**

Condition	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Too small	50	51	101
Leaky roof	50	50	100
No privacy	15	25	40
Structural damage	14	24	38
Hot	7	5	12
Smokey from cooking	2	3	5

**Table 10. Do you have enough firewood (compressed rice husk) for cooking your meals for one month?**

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Always	0	0	0
Never	40	41	81
Sometimes	19	18	37

**Table 10a. If you do not or sometimes have enough firewood, why not? (n=118)**

Reason	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Small quantity for family size	56	55	111
Sell/trade	5	2	7
Delayed distribution	1	0	1
No answer	0	4	4

**Table 10b. How do you compensate for the insufficient firewood supply? (n=118)**

Action	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Get from forest*	55	52	107
Trade/buy from refugees	7	15	22
Borrow from refugees	4	0	4
Use dry leaves	0	3	3
Trade/buy from villagers	0	1	1
Cook more than one meal at one time	0	1	1

\* 19 respondents reported that local residents, and sometimes the camp police and forest rangers, harass them by demanding wood or money, and will beat or confiscate their tools until paid.

**Table 11. Do you feel safe in the camp?\***

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Yes	27	24	51
No	29	28	57
Sometimes	3	7	10

\* The question asks about safety in the camp, but many respondents referred in their explanation to situations outside the camp.

**Table 11a. If you don't or sometimes feel safe, why?<sup>a</sup> (n=67)**

Reason	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Fear of punishment <sup>b</sup>	8	17	25
Harassment by villagers <sup>c</sup>	6	17	23
Harassment <sup>d</sup> by camp authorities	12	9	21
Women/Daughters are vulnerable <sup>e</sup>	8	5	13
Harassment by village authorities	4	4	8
Harassment by / quarrels among refugees	5	3	8
Forced, unpaid labour by camp authorities	3	0	3
Random searches for unregistered visitors	3	0	3
No redress (impunity for aggressors)	2	1	3
Fear of forced repatriation	2	0	2
No answer	1	1	2

<sup>a</sup> Six people who said they feel safe explained that it was better than Myanmar.

<sup>b</sup> Such as arrest, fines, beating, and confiscation of family book, by camp police, the CiC, or the *majee*, for breaking the rules: leaving the camp (without paying), sheltering visitors.

<sup>c</sup> Confiscation of woodcutting tools; demands for money, food, wood; beating; theft.

<sup>d</sup> Such as detention, threats, blackmail, beatings, extortion (for money, goods), unpaid labour.

<sup>e</sup> Vulnerable to sexual assault or harassment by villagers, refugees, and authorities, especially at night (when in the shed or going to the latrine) or when fetching water (in Kutupalong).

**Table 11b. Have you ever reported safety problems to anyone? (n=67)**

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Yes	13	22	35
No	19	13	32

**Table 11c. If you reported safety problems, to whom did you report them? (n=35)**

Person/Organisation	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
UNHCR	8	13	21
Camp-in-Charge	6	15	21
<i>Majee</i>	6	14	20
Camp police	2	6	8
MSF/Concern	1	6	7
Other*	2	0	2

\* Imam, school teacher, RRRC.

**Table 11d. If you never reported safety problems, why not? (n=32)**

Reason	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Expect no or unfair action (no redress)	9	12	21
Fear of reprisal/repercussion	6	10	16
No answer	0	2	2
Refused to answer	0	1	1

**Table 12. How have camp conditions changed over the last 10 years?**

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Better	35	36	71
Worse	20	8	28
No change	0	6	6
Some better, some worse	3	6	9
Some better, some no change	1	3	4

**Table 12a. Remarks: Conditions are better (n=71)**

Improvement	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Schools available/reopened	10	24	34
Skills training available	5	20	25
Food ration distribution steadied/corrected	3	13	20
No comment	14	4	18
Forced repatriation stopped/decreased	6	7	13
Safety / Security in camp	7	3	10
Water and Sanitation	6	1	7
Health situation	4	1	5
Easier movement (in camp)	1	4	5
Cleaner camp	1	4	5
Poultry/vegetable farming allowed	2	2	4

**Table 12b. Remarks: Conditions are worse (n=28)**

Condition	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Food quantity and variety decreased	11	8	19
<i>Majee</i> aggression	10	3	13
Villager aggression	2	8	10
Corruption	4	1	5
No redress on complaints	3	0	3
Disunity/hostility among refugees	1	1	2
No comment	1	0	1

**Table 12c. Remarks: Conditions haven't changed (n=6)**

Condition	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Legal status in Bangladesh and Myanmar <sup>a</sup>	0	4	4
Camp administration hasn't changed	0	4	4
No legal redress	1	1	2
No continuing education (past primary school)	0	2	2
Housing	1	1	2
Food quantity and variety	1	2	3
Harassment/violence <sup>b</sup>	0	3	3

<sup>a</sup> Unwanted refugee in Bangladesh, non-citizen in Myanmar, accounting for restricted movement, no "freedom."

<sup>b</sup> By camp authorities (CiC, police, *majee*) and villagers.



**Table 13. What are your wish(es) for the future?**

Wish	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
(Return when) peace/freedom/democracy/citizenship in Myanmar	43	47	90
To educate my children	24	27	47
To work (as a ...) / To earn money	6	6	12
To own a business	5	4	9
Marriage for children	4	5	9
To farm (on my own land (in Myanmar))	5	3	8
Happiness/Safety/Comfort for my family	5	3	8
To build / To live in my own home	5	2	7
Bangladeshi citizenship / To live in Bangladesh	1	5	6
Freedom (from fear, of speech, of religion, of movement) <sup>a</sup>	3	2	5
To learn a trade	3	2	5
Safety and security in the camp	2	3	5
To educate myself	2	2	4
Other <sup>b</sup>	2	2	4
To return to Myanmar (when cleared)	0	2	2

<sup>a</sup> In general: country not specified.

<sup>b</sup> To eat fish and meat; refugee registration for unregistered family members; to change the attitude and behaviour of the Rakhine people toward Muslims.

**Table 14. What do you think is needed to / Who can make these wish(es) come true?<sup>a</sup>**

Response	Nayapara	Kutupalong	Total
Political will of GoB and GoM	37	33	70
Support/pressure/cooperation of UNHCR/UN	36	30	66
Peace/Freedom/Democracy/Citizenship in Myanmar	18	15	33
Support/pressure of int'l organisations (MSF/Concern)	13	10	23
Political will/support/pressure of rich/developed countries/world leaders	11	10	21
Need a job	8	8	16
God's blessings	5	10	15
Need money	6	7	13
Acceptance of GoB to let us live as Bangladeshi citizens / to stay until peace in Myanmar	3	6	9
(GoM to return) Land to farm	5	3	8
Change of laws/government (Aung San Suu Kyi) in Myanmar	4	3	7
Schools/jobs (preoccupation) for young people	4	3	7
Skills training (for men and women)	4	3	7
Other <sup>b</sup>	4	3	7
Don't know	4	3	7
School books/supplies	4	2	6
Independence of Arakan	3	2	5
Representation of refugees in decision-making	3	2	5
Freedom of movement in the camp	2	1	3
UNHCR to take over law and order (no more <i>majee</i> )	2	1	3
Change (location of) camp (away from village)	0	3	3
No hope	2	1	3
Afraid to answer	1	1	2

<sup>a</sup> The results of Questions 14 and 15 have been combined due to an apparent misunderstanding of the questions and/or repetition of the responses.

<sup>b</sup> Such as "self-reliance, determination, and luck"; farming tools.

**ANNEX II**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Camp Name:             Nayapara             Kutupalong

Sex of Respondent:     Female             Male

1.     How old are you?  
       15-20             21-30             31-40             41 or older

2.     How many people live in your house? \_\_\_\_\_

3.     How many of your children were born in the camp? \_\_\_\_\_

4.     What are your main concerns in the camp?  none

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5.     Tell me about the water situation in the camp:

5a. Do you have enough water to meet your daily needs?

yes             no             sometimes             don't know

**[If 'yes,' skip to Question 6.]**

5b. If you do not or sometimes have enough water, why?

- there is not enough supply in the camp's water tanks
- I do not have enough water containers for the size of my family
- the water taps are not open long enough during the authorised times in the day
- don't know
- other 1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

- 5c. When you do not have enough water, what do you do?
- go to another water source
  - Specify the kind of water source: \_\_\_\_\_
  - get water from residents of the villages
  - get water from other refugees
  - nothing
  - don't know
  - other: 1. \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Tell me about the latrines in the camp:

- 6a. Do you use the latrines?
- always
  - sometimes
  - never
- [If 'always,' skip to Question 7.]**

6b. If 'sometimes' or 'never,' why?

- they are too dirty
- they are too far
- they are not private enough
- it is not in my habit
- refuse to answer
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Tell me about the food situation in the camp:

- 7a. Do you have enough food to feed all the people in your house two times per day?
- always
  - sometimes
  - never
- [If 'always,' skip to Question 8.]**

7b. If 'sometimes' or 'never,' why?

- the portions are too small for the size of my family
- the people who distribute the food keep a little food for themselves
- I sell or trade some food for other kinds of food available in the camp
- I sell some food for cash
- someone steals my food
- don't know
- other 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Where do you get health care?

- the MOH (Ministry of Health) doctor
- MSF/Concern health facilities
- other \_\_\_\_\_

8a. At health facility you go to, are you generally satisfied with the quality of treatment or services you received?

- yes
  - no
  - sometimes
- [If 'yes,' skip to Question 9.]**

8b. If 'no' or 'sometimes,' why?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

9. Tell me about your house: are there any current problems with your house?  
 it is too small for the size of my family  
 we have no privacy  
 the roof is leaking  
 other 1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 no problems  
 don't know

10. Do you have enough firewood to last you the month to cook your meals?  
 always  never  sometimes  don't know  
**[If 'always' or 'don't know,' skip to Question 11.]**

- 10a. If you do not or sometimes have enough firewood to last the week, why?  
 the amount distributed is too small for the size of my family  
 I sell or trade some firewood  
 I use the firewood for purposes other than cooking (e.g. for heating at night)  
 don't know  
 refuse to answer  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

- 10b. If you do not or sometimes have enough firewood to last the week, what do you do?  
 trade/buy wood from other refugees  
 trade/buy wood from villagers  
 go out to fetch wood from the forest  
 don't know  
 refuse to answer  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you feel safe in the camp?  
 yes  no  sometimes  
**[If 'yes,' skip to Question 11.]**

- 11a. If 'no' or 'sometimes,' why? (*explain or give examples*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- refuse to answer

- 11b. Have you ever reported these problems of safety to anyone?  
 yes  no  don't know

- 11c. If 'yes,' to whom?  
 UNHCR  
 CiC  
 police  
 Majee  
 MSF/Concern  
 other 1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 don't know

11d. If you have never reported these problems of safety to anyone, why not?

---

---

---

---

- don't know
- refuse to answer

12. How do you think overall conditions in the camp have changed over the last 10 years?

- better
- worse
- no change
- don't know
- other \_\_\_\_\_

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

---

13. What do you WANT to be your situation in 5 years?

---

---

---

14. What do you think is needed to achieve this desire after 5 years?

---

---

---

15. So, we asked you about your main concerns living in the camp. How do you think these problems can be solved? By whom?

---

---

---