

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Declining Humanitarian Funding: Impacts on Economic and Food Security Among Rohingya Refugees and Host Communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh¹ Moammad Shajan Siraj²

Abstract

The ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, has intensified due to declining humanitarian funding, affecting both refugees and host communities. Despite continued international support, severe economic and food insecurity challenges threaten social cohesion and regional stability. This study examines the impact of reduced humanitarian aid on the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities. It also explores aid dependency, labor market shifts, and coping strategies. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining 106 surveys, five focus group discussions, and ten key informant interviews in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas. The analysis was guided by a human security framework informed by Sen's Capability Approach, Relative Deprivation Theory, and Burden-Sharing Theory. Reductions in humanitarian aid profoundly impacted economic security, resulting in wage declines from Bangladeshi Taka (BDT) 550 to BDT 300–350 and a contraction in employment opportunities. Host communities have faced intensified competition, and aid dependency has grown among refugees. Simultaneously, food security deteriorated due to cuts in monthly food rations in 2023, before being restored in 2024. These reductions constrained access to adequate food and reduced dietary diversity, with 72% of Rohingya households falling below the minimum food expenditure level, contributing to a Global Acute Malnutrition rate of 15.1%, the highest since 2017. Both communities resorted to harmful coping mechanisms, such as borrowing and reducing meals. Additionally, psychological stress among refugees, linked to loss of dignity, has been reported despite ongoing aid. These findings underscore the urgent need for sustained humanitarian funding, inclusive livelihood programs, and policy adaptation to promote resilience and equity. This study

¹ This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) and was accepted for publication on 24/5/2025. The author thanks Dr. Md. Touhidul Islam, who provided indispensable guidance and support in exploring human security. Special acknowledgments are also extended to the data collectors and study participants for their significant contributions. The author thanks the Bangladesh University of Professionals for the opportunity to study peace, conflict, and human rights, and the State University of Bangladesh for fostering an environment conducive to exploring critical issues. Appreciation has also been extended to Action Against Hunger for its encouragement and creation of a supportive environment for conducting this research. Finally, sincere gratitude is expressed to the authors of the secondary data sources used in this study, especially ISCG and the Food Security Sector.

² Moammad Shajan Siraj holds a master's degree in peace, conflict, and human rights studies from the Bangladesh University of Professional Studies, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is currently working with Action Against Hunger/Action Contre la Faim in the Rohingya refugee response, Cox's Bazar.

provides insights into dual vulnerability patterns and the psychosocial toll of protracted crises, offering guidance for more sustainable and inclusive humanitarian responses.

Key Words:

Rohingya refugees, host communities, economic security, food insecurity, humanitarian aid, Cox's Bazar

1 Introduction

The global increase in forced displacement, which has roots in historical and colonial impacts, has worsened because of conflicts and human rights violations (Seppälä et al., 2020). The Rohingya, a Sunni Muslim population of approximately 3.5 million worldwide, experience continual displacement from Myanmar's Rakhine State, with the most substantial exodus occurring in August 2017, when a significant number sought refuge in Cox's Bazar³, resulting in 960,128 individuals staying in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char,⁴ Bangladesh (Albert & Maizland, 2020; Rohingya Refugee Response, 2024). The Rohingya crisis involved forced migration, identity issues, and a history of exclusion, highlighting its complexity beyond Bangladesh and Myanmar's foreign policies (Islam & Rahman, 2018). Described by refugees as 'a life of football', the situation reflects their vulnerability and constant displacement between the two countries, with no resolution in sight (Uddin, 2018).

The influx of refugees has exacerbated the existing issues in Cox's Bazar, including poverty, infrastructure limitations, and resource scarcity, thereby intensifying economic tensions with host communities (Talukder, 2022; Ahmad & Naeem, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the Ukraine conflict, and reduced funding have further strained resources, leading to worsening food insecurity, declining health outcomes, and increasing instability (UN OCHA, 2023; WFP, 2023; Anwar et al., 2023; Tasci & Ahmed, 2022).

Table 1: Funds managed under JRP (2017-2024) (Inter Sector Coordination Group, 2024)

| JRP (year) | Total appeal (\$M) | Fund Received (\$M) | Gap(\$M) | % (GAP) |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------|---------|
| 2017 | 434.1 | 314.6 | 119.5 | 28% |
| 2018 | 950.8 | 688.1 | 262.7 | 28% |
| 2019 | 920.5 | 692 | 228.5 | 25% |
| 2020 | 1058.1 | 629.5 | 428.6 | 41% |
| 2021 | 943.2 | 689.7 | 253.5 | 27% |
| 2022 | 880.7 | 619.7 | 261.0 | 30% |
| 2023 | 875.9 | 620 | 255.9 | 29% |
| 2024 as of 9/2024 | 852.4 | 455.7 | 396.7 | 47% |

³ Cox's Bazar is a coastal district in southeastern Bangladesh near the Myanmar border. It hosts the world's largest refugee settlement, with over 900,000 Rohingya refugees residing in camps, particularly in the Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts.

⁴ Bhasan Char is a remote island in the Bay of Bengal developed by the Government of Bangladesh to accommodate part of the Rohingya refugee population. The island has been equipped with housing, embankments, and basic infrastructure.

Table 1 illustrates that from 2017 to 2024, the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya issue has faced financing deficiencies, with the gaps becoming more pronounced in recent years. Initial appeals from 2017 to 2019 experienced funding gaps of approximately 25–28%; however, this gap widened to 41% in 2020, likely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting global priorities. Although there has been a slight improvement from 2021 to 2023, the gaps remain substantial, ranging from 27% to 30%. By September 2024, the funding gap had reached 47%, with less than half of the requested funds received. This trend suggests increasing donor fatigue, competing global crises, and a diminishing international focus. The repercussions are severe: Essential services for both Rohingya refugees and host communities are underfunded, leading to deteriorating living conditions and heightened economic vulnerability. Immediate international re-engagement, diversified donor support, and enhanced advocacy are crucial for sustaining humanitarian efforts and preventing further destabilization (Inter Sector Coordination Group [ISCG], 2024). For example, food aid was reduced from \$12.50 to \$8 per person per month in 2023, increased to \$10 in January 2024, and eventually restored to \$12.50 by September 2024. Despite this recovery, the initial reduction forced many refugees to adopt extreme coping mechanisms (UN OCHA, 2023; WFP, 2023). Funding cuts have largely left unmet global humanitarian needs, with the UN's 2023 appeal meeting only 50% of the required funding, highlighting a significant gap between needs and available resources (Oxfam, 2023).

Bangladesh faces substantial financial and logistical burdens in supporting Rohingya refugees, as it balances humanitarian obligations with economic strain (Faye, 2021). Infrastructure costs, including camp fencing and Bhasan Char development, exceed \$100 million, and annual support costs reach \$1.21 billion, adding pressure to the economy amid global challenges such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and rising fuel prices (Korobi, 2023; Palma, 2021; Rahman, 2023).

Although some international responses advocate for durable solutions such as formal labor markets or resettlement sponsorships, legal migration pathways have been implemented only in limited instances (Ferris & Kerwin, 2023). The Rohingya crisis faced challenges in achieving sustainable solutions, such as resettlement or integration. Long-term solutions include restoring civil and political rights, burden-sharing by wealthy nations, and capacity building among refugees, but they require sustained funding (Rashid, 2020).

Funding cuts significantly affected local livelihoods, decreasing employment opportunities and, as a result, leading to an 11% drop in average income from 2015 to 2020, despite a 5% annual increase. In 2021, Cox's Bazar's employment rate was 20 percentage points lower than the national average (Jahan, 2023). The presence of the Rohingya also affected daily wages in Teknaf, with average wages dropping from 550 BDT in 2017 to 300-350 BDT in 2019 and a similar decrease in Ukhiya (Ansar & Khaled, 2021). This crisis had a severe impact on household income and asset ownership, with annual income and land ownership declining by 24% and 39% between 2016 and 2020, respectively (Ullah et al., 2021).

Funding cuts have also impacted the local economy, with one-third of camp businesses operated by Bangladeshis, which reflects local engagement in camp economies (Filipski et al., 2021). The local government's prioritization of the Rohingya people often leads to resource disputes and marginalization, highlighting the need for policies addressing these

issues (Islam et al., 2022). Frequent access to natural resources by Rohingya refugees has exacerbated socioeconomic tensions, resulting in an increasing generalization of their role in socio-environmental crises. (Sadat al Sajib et al., 2022).

The decrease in humanitarian aid has severely impacted food security, with studies indicating that only 21.6% of Rohingya households report acceptable food security levels, with better outcomes observed among those with additional income sources (Anwar et al., 2023). Reduced aid worsens nutritional well-being among displaced individuals and host communities (Abdullah et al., 2018; As & Handana, 2022), underscoring the need for sustainable solutions to improve food security.

Globally, funding cuts to humanitarian efforts negatively impact human security, and the compounding effects of overpopulation and resource scarcity exacerbate these challenges, as observed in refugee-hosting nations such as Jordan and Lebanon (Schiffbauer et al., 2015). Globally, many refugees are housed in camps without permanent solutions, leading to health issues, limited labor market skills, and developmental challenges, which disincentivize states from providing local resettlement (Pressé, D., & Thomson, J., 2008). Despite being perceived as a burden, refugees are also recognized as making significant contributions to the economies of host countries, particularly through higher rates of entrepreneurship (Newman et al., 2024). Understanding the potential harm of refugee aid to poorer host communities can help agencies respond appropriately and develop effective policies (Khaled, 2021).

This study, therefore, investigated the implications of reduced humanitarian funding on the human security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

Human security prioritizes the protection of individuals from threats such as poverty, hunger, and violence, thereby shifting the focus from state-centric security to the well-being of individuals. This concept, introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994, encompasses economic, food, health, and personal security. In humanitarian contexts, such as the Rohingya crisis, human security offers a comprehensive framework for assessing immediate survival needs (e.g., food) and broader issues, including dignity, agency, and resilience. This study focuses on economic vulnerability, food insecurity, and the shifting dynamics of livelihoods. Specifically, it focuses on how funding cuts affect local labor markets, food supply chains, and household resilience in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas⁵, including key refugee camps in Palongkhali and Rajapalong unions. The research also explores the socioeconomic impact of non-governmental organization (NGO) interventions and their subsequent withdrawal due to funding shortages.

This study is grounded in three pivotal social science theories that inform the analysis of economic and food insecurity in humanitarian contexts: Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, Relative Deprivation Theory, and Burden Sharing Theory.

First, According to Wells (2011) Sen's Capability Approach is a human-centered framework that assesses well-being based on individuals' capabilities, genuine freedoms, or opportunities to achieve valued ways of living. Unlike economic measures, which focus

⁵ Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas are sub-districts of Cox's Bazar District in southeastern Bangladesh, where the majority of Rohingya refugee camps are located.

solely on income, this theory emphasizes what people can do (function) and be (capability). This highlights the importance of removing barriers such as poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion, enabling individuals to lead lives they value. In humanitarian settings, this framework shifts the focus from basic service provision to enhancing agency, autonomy, and empowerment of displaced individuals and vulnerable communities (Robeyns, 2005). Capabilities include accessing nutritious food, finding meaningful work, and engaging in community life with dignity.

Second, as developed by Runciman (1966), the Relative Deprivation Theory explains the discontent that arises when individuals or groups perceive themselves as disadvantaged compared to others. This perception may not stem from absolute poverty, but from inequality in access to resources or recognition. In refugee-hosting contexts, this theory highlights the emotional and socioeconomic strain experienced by host populations, who perceive refugees as receiving disproportionate aid, even if both groups face hardships. Perceived inequality can lead to resentment, social friction, and a decline in solidarity.

Third, the Burden-Sharing Theory, rooted in international relations and refugee studies, posits that the support for refugees should be distributed equally across the global community (Betts, 2009). When one nation or region bears a disproportionate share, often at the expense of lower-income host countries like Bangladesh, it creates structural imbalances and long-term instability. This theory emphasizes the moral and practical necessity for wealthier states and international institutions to make significant contributions to funding, resettlement, and capacity-building support.

The primary focus of this study was to examine the impact of declining humanitarian funding on the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar. The central hypothesis is that reductions in humanitarian aid exacerbate economic and food insecurities, leading to increased competition for resources, diminished livelihoods, and heightened tensions between refugees and host communities.

Ultimately, this study specifically examines how declining humanitarian funding affects labor markets, food access, and the socioeconomic dynamics between refugees and host communities. Specific subthemes include (i) economic insecurity characterized by employment loss and wage decline, and (ii) food insecurity, including ration cuts, reduced dietary diversity, and nutritional decline.

This investigation aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This study highlights the urgent need for resilience-building strategies in humanitarian contexts.

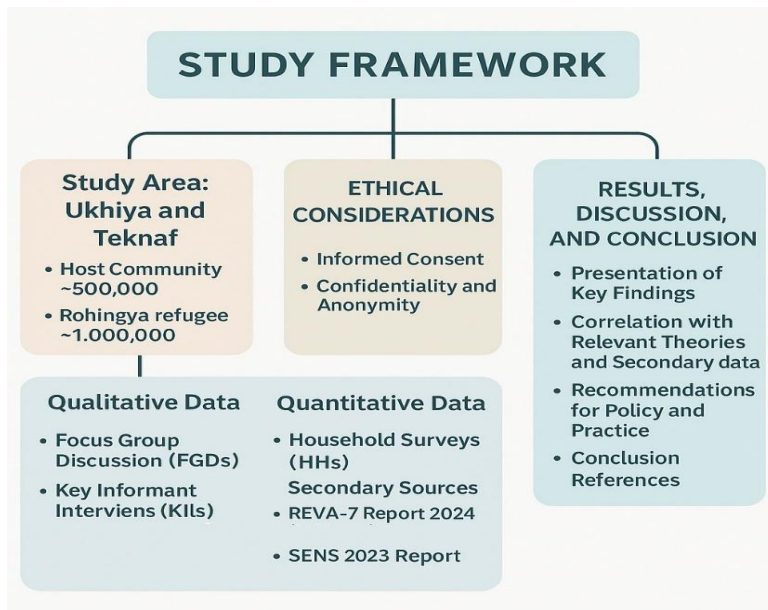
This research is significant for decision-makers and humanitarian players, providing critical insights into the consequences of funding cuts on vulnerable populations. These findings underscore the need for sustainable funding mechanisms and policies that address both immediate needs and long-term structural challenges.

2 Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to assess the impact of declining humanitarian funding on the economic and

food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas, as well as Cox's Bazar. Primary data were collected from November 2023 to March 2024. In contrast, secondary data were examined until September 2024. Primarily, the Joint Response Plan from the ISCG, the Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA-7), and the UNHCR Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) report for 2023.

Figure 1: Study Framework



2.1 Geographical Focus

The study was conducted in key refugee and host community areas: the Palongkhali Union (Ukhiya), Rajapalong Union (Ukhiya), and Hnila and Whykong Unions (Teknaf). These areas were selected because they are demographically significant, host a substantial portion of the Rohingya population, and are the sites of major humanitarian operations.

2.2 Quantitative Study Population and Sampling

This study targeted adults aged 18 years. A total of 106 respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Among them, 58% were Rohingya refugees residing in camps, and 42% were members of the host community. The respondents were drawn proportionally from each location based on population density and accessibility. The sample size was calculated at a 95% confidence level, with a 10% margin of error. A buffer was included to account for potential non-responses. Purposive sampling ensured the participants had relevant experience with humanitarian assistance and its reduction.

Sample Size Calculation for the Survey:

$$\text{Sample Size, } n = \frac{p \times (1-p)}{\frac{e^2}{t^2} + \frac{p \times (1-p)}{N}}$$

Table 2: Sample Size Calculation with Details

| | |
|---|---------|
| Size of population (N) | 138,046 |
| Degree of variability (p) | 0.5 |
| Precision of the results (e) | 0.1 |
| Confidence level (t) | 1.96 |
| n = | 96 |
| Real size of the sample (add 10% due to false answer) | 106 |

The statistical approach in social science research ensures the validity and reliability of the findings through purposive sampling, a non-random technique that selects participants who meet specific criteria and provides valuable insights into the impact of humanitarian responses on human security in the target area.

2.3 Qualitative Method

The study involved five focus group discussions with 40 participants and ten key interviews in Palongkhali, Rajapalong, and Hnila. It prioritized ethical considerations, obtained informed consent, explained the purpose, procedures, and risks, and ensured data anonymization for confidentiality.

Table 3: Sample Size Finalization for the Study

| Study method | Sample size | Host participants | Camp (Rohingya) participants | Total participants |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Survey | 106 | 45 | 61 | 106 |
| Key informant interview (KII) | 10 | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Focus Group Discussion (FGD) | 05 | 24 | 16 | 40 |

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were transcribed, coded, and subjected to thematic analysis to discern key patterns and sector-specific challenges. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using KoBo Toolbox and Microsoft Excel to produce descriptive statistics and explore the relationships between aid reduction, employment, and food security. Secondary data from pertinent sectors facilitated the triangulation. The analysis was based on Sen's Capability Approach as discussed by Wells (2011), Relative Deprivation Theory, and Burden-Sharing Theory to interpret the economic and food security dynamics.

2.5 Ethics

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. The participants were thoroughly informed about the study's objectives, methodologies, and potential risks associated with their involvement. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously upheld to ensure a safe

environment for the participants to share their experiences. All data were anonymized to protect their identities during analysis and reporting.

3 Study Results

This study investigates the economic, food, and health security dimensions of the Rohingya population and the host communities, emphasizing the effects of humanitarian activities, including job competition, wage pressure, disruptions to local businesses, marginalization, aid dependence, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

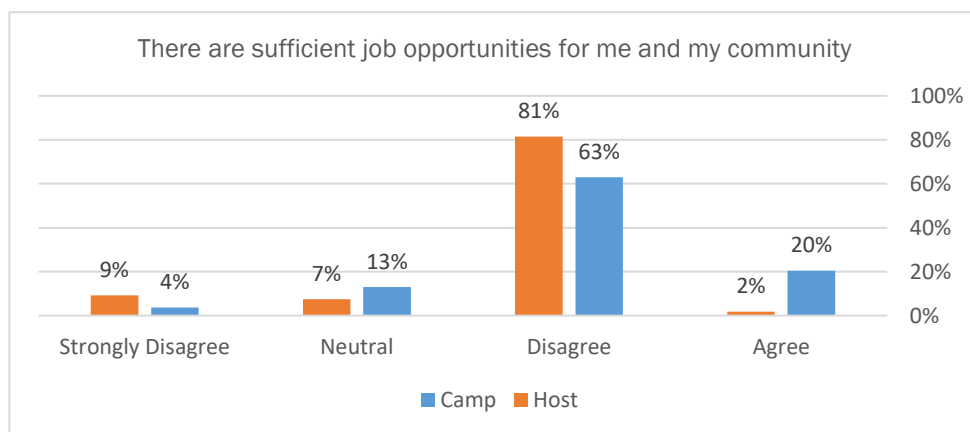
Understanding the demographic composition of the study participants is essential before exploring the economic and food security outcomes.

- **Location:** 31% of the respondents were from the Palongkhali Union, a central site for Rohingya refugee settlements.
- **Gender:** The sample had a gender imbalance of 72% males and 28% females, primarily due to cultural and religious constraints limiting female participation.
- **Education:** Education levels vary widely. Among Rohingya respondents, 78% had no formal education. In contrast, 17% of the host community respondents were graduates (passed the courses), and 20% had completed secondary education.
- **Occupation:** Employment types reflect broader economic disparities. While 52% of the Rohingya respondents engaged in manual labor, the host community showed more diversity while working in the private sector or self-employed.

3.1 Economic Security

This study highlights the complex condition of economic security in humanitarian crises. It investigated community perceptions of income-generating opportunities and collected feedback on employment accessibility. The quantitative data are visualized in Figure 2. 81% of host community members disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed with the statement that sufficient work opportunities exist. Among the Rohingya refugees, 63% expressed concern about limited job availability, although 20% agreed that they had some opportunities, mainly within camp-based NGO roles.

Figure 2: Perception of Job Opportunities as an Individual and for the Community



The gap between the two communities is attributable to the adverse effects of the influx of the Rohingya on vulnerable local populations.

The study noted that only 2% of the host community agreed that there were enough job opportunities compared to 20% of the Rohingya population. Although the agreement rate was higher among the Rohingya refugees, it remained low. This discrepancy is attributed to providing aid within camps, which offers limited employment opportunities for NGOs and service providers.

Figure 3: Community Perception of Economic Security

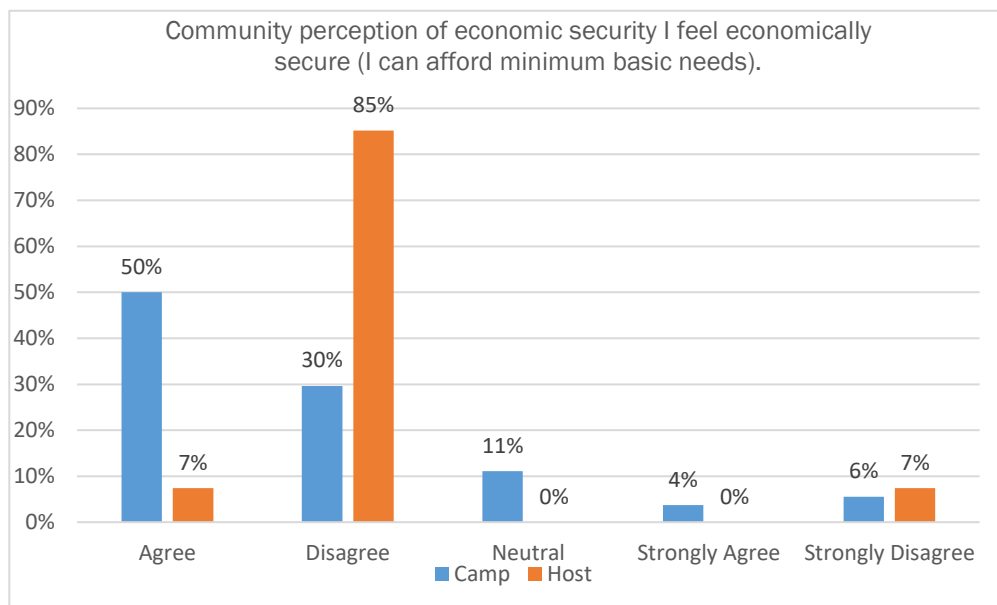


Figure 3 highlights a significant difference in how the Rohingya refugee camp community perceives economic security compared with the host community. Half the camp residents felt economically secure, whereas only 7% of the host community shared this view. On the other hand, 85% of the host community members disagreed with feeling secure, in contrast to 30% of the camp residents. Despite having access to national systems, host communities feel more economically vulnerable than refugees, who depend mainly on humanitarian aid. This difference could be attributed to several factors. Refugees in camps often receive regular assistance such as food, shelter, and healthcare, which can provide a basic level of security. By contrast, host communities deal with rising inflation, limited job opportunities, and increased competition for resources without similar support. The data also show that only 4% of camp residents strongly agreed with feeling secure, whereas 6% strongly disagreed, reflecting a mixed and fragile sense of stability. Although capturing actual economic security is challenging owing to factors such as understanding, willingness to express the real situation, sampling methods, and limited sample size, this perceived security gap highlights growing resentment or a sense of neglect among host communities dependent on assistance. To address this imbalance, development actors should enhance support for host populations by focusing on income generation, infrastructure, and service access to foster social cohesion and ensure shared resilience.

The qualitative study reported that host community members could fulfill basic needs through gardening on the hillside land, daily casual labor, fishing, and salt production before the crisis. However, the Rohingya influx disrupted these activities, causing many locals to lose their income sources and fail to find viable alternatives. The study reveals that competition in the labor market intensified as Rohingya workers accepted lower wages, leading to further marginalization of the host population.

3.2 Impact on Local Labor and Economic Marginalization

The arrival of Rohingya refugees has significantly impacted the local labor market. Rohingya workers, often willing to accept lower wages, exert downward pressure on earnings. Several key informants have highlighted that daily wage rates have decreased to between BDT 250 and 300, disproportionately affecting the host community. A local female leader from Whykong noted that this wage disparity exacerbated economic tensions and marginalized the host community, depriving them of access to the local labor market.

Qualitative analysis revealed a local perspective, particularly through a statement by a female leader in Whykong who observed that

“It was a frequent occurrence in my village (near my house) to see two Rohingya laborers consistently present, patiently awaiting any available employment opportunities each day. However, throughout the previous two months, there was a change in this situation. Currently, more than eight of them share the same hope. This alteration is like a heavy cloud over our community.”

Her sentiments capture rising tensions as local laborers struggle to compete with cheaper Rohingya labor, contributing to declining wages and economic instability. She further stated,

“Nowadays, the challenge goes beyond seeking employment. Our community is struggling with the anxiety and hidden difficulties of witnessing the increasing difficulty in sustaining a livelihood due to declining work opportunities and wages.”

A KII respondent from Rajapalong Union noted that many local youths suspended their education to work with NGOs at the height of the humanitarian response. According to his comments,

“After the arrival of Rohingya refugees, a large number of young people, particularly college and university students, took on front-line roles in the Rohingya response, motivated by their high incomes. Sadly, a large number of them stopped or postponed their schooling in order to do this. They have not finished their higher education; thus, they are unemployed because of funding reductions and cannot find new opportunities. They are becoming more vulnerable because of this, as social and familial pressures may cause them to engage in criminal activity.”

Aid reductions have led to job losses, and many are now unemployed, creating new risks of criminal involvement and social unrest. Rajapalong's study data indicates positive changes, such as infrastructure improvements and new local markets following this influx. As NGOs arrived to support the Rohingya population, they created opportunities for the host community to rent land for NGO offices and warehouses. However, many locals, who have come to rely on this source of income, are now struggling with funding cuts and NGOs' departure. One participant shared,

“We used to grow food on our government-leased property, but we had to give it up to build a

camp. We found a solution. I work for an NGO, and my father has rented part of our land for their offices and warehouses. Everything was fine until last year, when the NGO left, and I lost my job and extra income. We have not regained ownership of our land, which was vital to our income.”

3.3 Decline in Local Businesses and Aid Dependency

This research critically analyzes the economic disruptions resulting from the decline in regional humanitarian aid, emphasizing the diminished informal business interactions between the host community and the Rohingya population. Previously, some Rohingya refugees engaged in barter trade, selling goods, such as oil and rice, to local businesses in exchange for essential items, including nutritious food. However, these transactions have significantly declined because of reduced aid allocations, constraining the economic flexibility of both communities.

Host community businesses, especially small-scale suppliers of bamboo, latrine slabs, and other non-food items (NFIs), have experienced a corresponding downturn as construction activities in camps have diminished. The decrease in funding has also adversely affected food supply chains, significantly reducing the availability of fresh vegetables in camps. While 50% of Rohingya refugees had previously accessed fresh products from local markets, this figure has now decreased to 25%, driven by escalating prices and a diminished aid-based purchasing capacity.

The findings underscore the compounded economic strain on local businesses, particularly those in food and construction supply chains. This research highlights that reductions in aid diminish the purchasing power of vulnerable populations and impede local economic ecosystems, necessitating immediate strategic interventions to mitigate long-term socioeconomic instability in the region.

3.4 Migration, Illegal Activities, and Aid Dependency

In response to economic hardship, research indicates that both the Rohingya and the host communities engage in illicit activities as a means of survival. Numerous Rohingya refugees are planning to migrate irregularly to countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia because of the scarcity of legitimate income opportunities. Similarly, many members of the host community have turned to informal employment, although they continue to experience marginalization and economic insecurity. This study elucidates how specific individuals previously employed by NGOs are now facing difficulties due to diminished funding and limited job prospects.

For instance, one local participant remarked,

“As a watchman, I was earning a solid 25,000 BDT, which was more than sufficient. Though my work title has changed, my employer is still the same, and my duties have not changed, but I have been given the job of watchman for volunteers. The problem is that my pay was reduced to 10,000 BDT. Everything seems increasingly expensive, so I am always balancing on the edge of financial instability.”

Similarly, within the camps, participants voiced their dissatisfaction with current aid arrangements. One Rohingya refugee from Camp 1E stated,

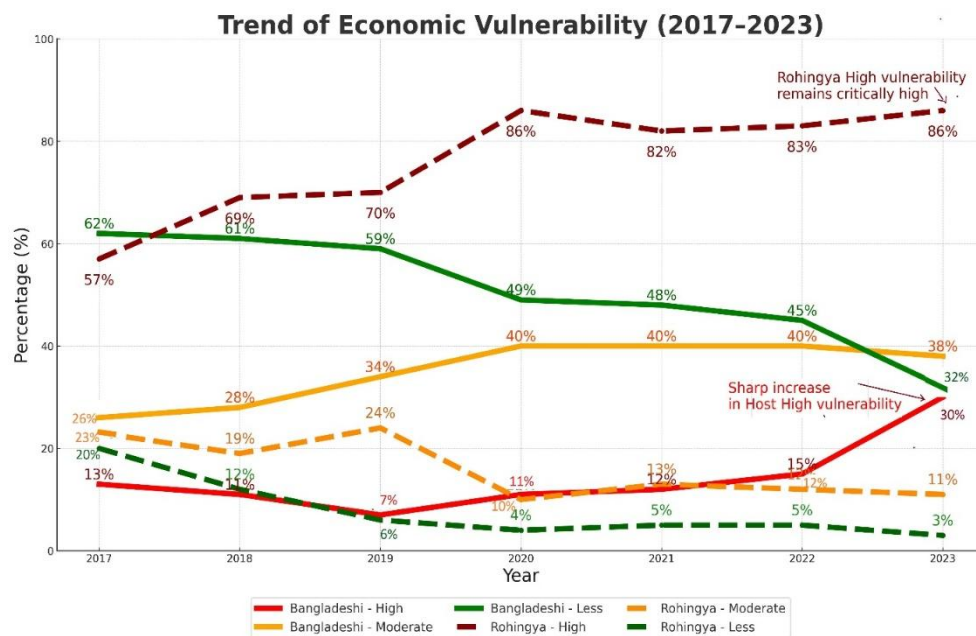
“I was respected in the camp as a volunteer team leader. My modest wages and food rations enabled me to purchase all the required goods. Now, we only receive rations, and escalating prices render it impossible to acquire all we need. Presently, unemployment and the loss of respect are also detrimental to my mental health.”

A 45-year-old female participant in the camp conveyed her frustration, stating,

“When my husband was able to work casually with NGO activities, our livelihood status was different. Those days are over. Now unemployed, he receives food as a ration. It is hardly sufficient to prevent hunger. Clothing? Fish? Fruits? We can barely conceive of such luxuries.”

3.5 Economic Vulnerability and Outlook

Figure 4: Economic Vulnerability among the Rohingya Refugees and the Host Community



As illustrated in Figure 4, the findings from the REVA-7 revealed a significant shift in the vulnerability levels of Bangladeshi host communities over time. The proportion of individuals experiencing high vulnerability has markedly increased, doubling from 15% in 2022 to 30% in 2023, underscoring heightened stress and diminished capacity to manage shocks. Meanwhile, moderate vulnerability has remained relatively stable at approximately 40% since 2020, indicating that a substantial portion of the population continues to contend with unresolved risks.

In contrast, the proportion of the less vulnerable (resilient) group has decreased dramatically from 62% in 2017 to 32% in 2023, suggesting a troubling decline in resilience, likely attributable to persistent socioeconomic challenges and resource depletion. Several factors contribute to this situation, as host communities face rising vulnerability due to interconnected challenges. The protracted refugee crisis has pressured local resources, services, and infrastructure, while reduced donor support has limited aid availability. Climate events, such as floods and cyclones, further impact livelihoods. Economic inflation and job competition have heightened financial insecurity, and social tensions have escalated due to the prolonged presence of refugees. Collectively, these elements gradually eroded community resilience.

In contrast, the Rohingya population continued to endure persistently high levels of vulnerability (Figure 4). High vulnerability sharply increased from 57% in 2017 to 86% in 2023, reflecting deep-seated insecurity, marginalization, and reliance on aid. Simultaneously, moderate vulnerability significantly decreased from 23% to 11%, not due to improved conditions but because more individuals have transitioned into the highly vulnerable category. The less vulnerable (resilient) group nearly disappeared, declining from 20% to just 3%, indicating that the community has almost no segment with sufficient coping capacity or stability. The underlying reason for this is that the Rohingya population faces chronic vulnerability rooted in legal statelessness, which restricts easy access to education, livelihoods, and freedom of movement. They resided in overcrowded, disaster-prone camps with inadequate sanitation and infrastructure. Work restrictions keep them dependent on aid, while diminishing humanitarian support reduces access to necessities. Years of displacement and trauma have also adversely affected mental health and community resilience, exacerbating long-term insecurity. Without targeted investments in livelihoods, education, infrastructure, and governance reforms, both populations risk being further entrenched in poverty and long-term vulnerability. Addressing this complex situation requires an integrated response that balances immediate humanitarian needs with sustainable development support for the host regions.

REVA-7 further reports that in 2023, household expenditures in Bangladesh increased due to the global economic crisis, characterized by price hikes, USD shortages, and food inflation, reaching a 12-year high of 12.56%. The average monthly per capita expenditure for Rohingya households in Cox's Bazar increased by BDT 203, while the Bangladeshi community experienced an increase of BDT 122 compared to that in 2022. However, Rohingya households in Cox's Bazar spent significantly less (BDT 1,252 or US\$11.3 per capita per month) than the Bangladeshi community (BDT 3,131 or US\$28.3). When accounting for the imputed value of humanitarian assistance, expenditures for Rohingya households in Cox's Bazar rose to BDT 2,732 (US\$24.7) per capita per month, and for Bangladeshi households, it reached BDT 3,430 (US\$31.0). This finding underscores the critical role of aid in meeting these basic needs. Nevertheless, ration cuts led to a significant decrease in Rohingya household spending in Cox's Bazar, highlighting the severe impact of reduced support (World Food Programme, 2024).

The data shown in Figure 5 below shows a stark and escalating food insecurity crisis among the Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar, particularly in the absence of humanitarian assistance. Without aid, over 80% of the Rohingya fall below the food Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) consistently from 2019 to 2023, with negligible improvement. Even with assistance, the percentage below food MEB rose from just 1% in 2022 to 23% in 2023, indicating a deterioration in aid adequacy. This sharp decline is likely driven by several causal factors: declining international funding, increasing population pressure, and rising food prices due to inflation and supply chain disruptions. Moreover, the policy shift to reduce rations from \$12 to \$8 per person/month in early 2023 critically undermined the coping capacity of an already aid-dependent population.

Figure 5: Economic Vulnerability with and without Assistance among Rohingya Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)

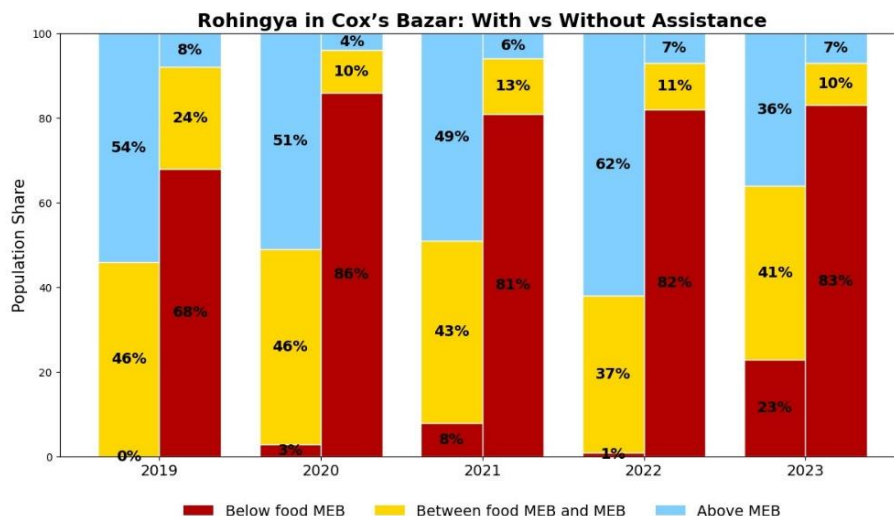
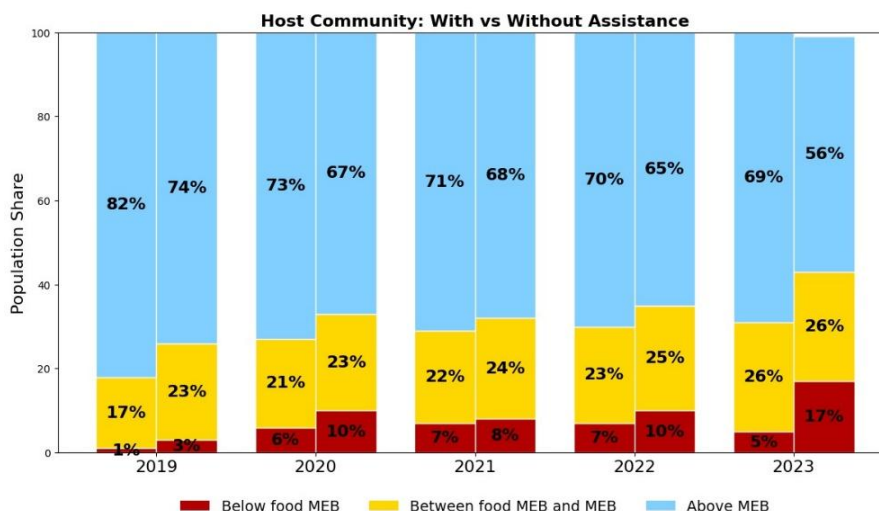


Figure 6: Economic Vulnerability with and without Assistance among Bangladeshi Host Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)



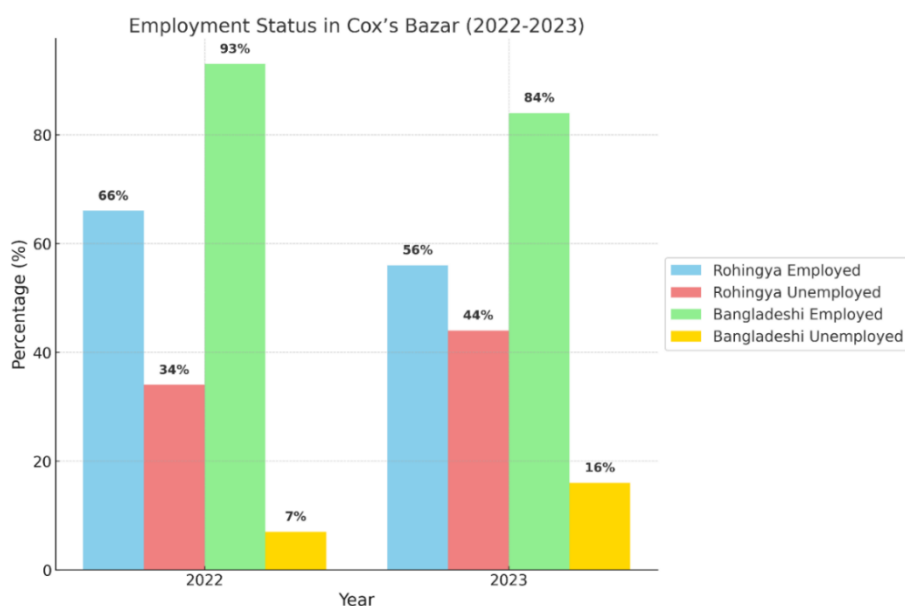
While the host community demonstrated in Figure 6 above has a relatively more resilient food security status compared to the Rohingya, recent trends suggest emerging vulnerabilities. The proportion of host households below food MEB without assistance increased from 3% in 2019 to 17% in 2023, showing a slow but concerning erosion of economic security. Even with aid, food insecurity among the host rose to 5% in 2023. This pattern is likely driven by prolonged resource strain from the protracted refugee presence, rising living costs, and limited livelihood diversification in Teknaf and Ukhiya, which remain economically fragile. There may also be a growing perception of inequality and aid imbalance, which can strain social cohesion and increase local resentment.

Comparing both scenarios revealed that food assistance is a critical stabilizing factor for the host and Rohingya communities. Without assistance, the host population's economic resilience deteriorates rapidly, indicating their growing dependence on support amidst external shocks, such as inflation, reduced livelihoods, and resource competition. In contrast, while the Rohingya community remains chronically vulnerable even with assistance, food support reduces the severity of hardship, increasing the proportion of those reaching above the MEB.

These trends suggest that both structural constraints (e.g., lack of income-generating opportunities for the Rohingya) and increasing economic pressure on host communities (e.g., rising costs of living and strain on local markets) drive heightened vulnerability. Food assistance is a buffer against these pressures, and its absence directly correlates with deteriorating outcomes.

Figure 7 below illustrates the employment and unemployment trends among the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar and the host Bangladeshi community for 2022 and 2023. There was a noticeable decline in employment in both groups over the two years. In the Rohingya community, employment dropped from 66% in 2022 to 56% in 2023, while unemployment rose from 34% to 44%. Similarly, employment among the Bangladeshi host community fell from 93% to 84%, with unemployment increasing from 7% to 16%. Although both communities experienced worsening employment conditions, the Rohingya population remained significantly more vulnerable, with a much higher unemployment rate than the host community. This trend may be due to economic slowdowns, reduced humanitarian support, and restrictions on formal employment opportunities for Rohingya refugees. The data highlight the need for targeted livelihood interventions to address the growing economic challenges faced by both Rohingya and host communities.

Figure 7: Employment and Unemployment Status among the Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi Host Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)



3.6 Food Insecurity: Availability, Accessibility, and Utilization

Participants in the host community's FGDs frequently mentioned difficulties accessing food. A local leader from Whykong stated,

"Finding food in the market can be particularly challenging for us. Most of the food seems to be allocated to the Rohingya refugee camps. It appears they neglect us, the residents. We feel excluded, especially when buying food at the Rohingya market" (male, 55; local leader from Whykong).

This sense of deprivation among the host community highlights the competition for limited resources between the two populations. Although assistance has decreased over time, the Rohingya community has received rations, contributing to further tensions. A Rohingya participant from Refugee Camp 11 explained,

"The ration can be useful for some essential products, but it cannot be used to purchase other nutritious food and meat. Humans desire to eat various fruits and meats, yet those rations cannot provide adequate sustenance" (male, 28; Camp 11).

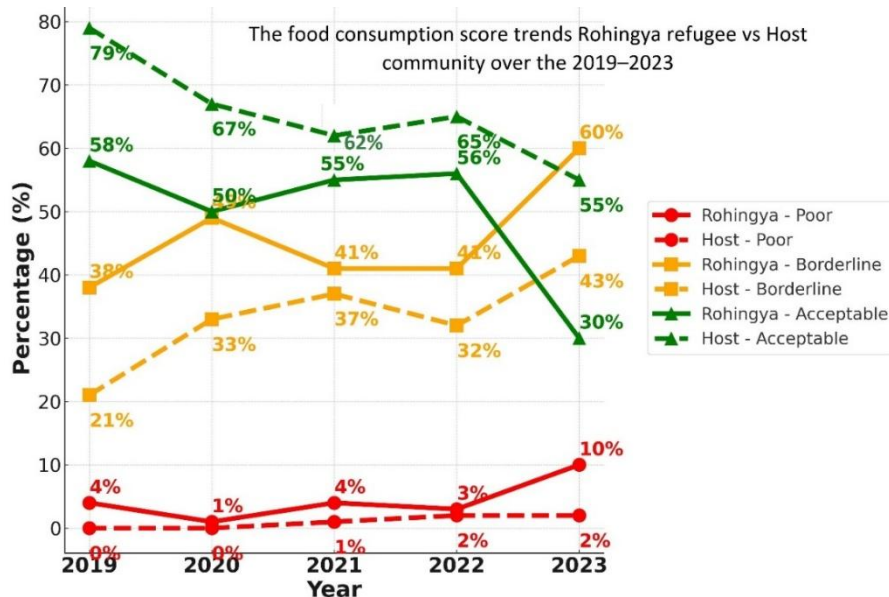
Initially, the Rohingya received approximately \$12 (1,224 BDT) per month for food, which included essential items, such as rice, vegetables, oil, and eggs. However, ration cuts reduced this amount to \$8, forcing families to cut back on essential purchases even as food prices continued to rise. A subsequent increase brought the amount to \$10 and then \$12.5, and there was a high-risk situation when U.S. fund cuts and ration allocation were proposed. Fortunately, the allocation of \$12.5, as a fund cut, was not considered for emergency food. Despite this, challenges persist, owing to the rising prices of essential goods. Households with many children may sell products to acquire other necessities, but this remains insufficient. The rising cost of food has forced many participants to skip meals and reduce the quantity of food consumed. One-third of the participants reported eliminating one meal from their daily routine.

According to KIIs, Table 4 presents an overview of the monthly ration allocation per person. The data clearly show that as ration cuts increase, access to food decreases, a trend directly linked to rising malnutrition rates. The UNHCR Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey reported a deterioration in the Global Acute Malnutrition rate, reaching 15.1%. This level signifies a situation of very high public health concern. The crisis may worsen further if the recent shift in U.S. policy, specifically, the termination of USAID funding, negatively affects ongoing humanitarian programs in the region.

Table 4: Food Ration Access to the Rohingya Refugees with the Current Allocation.

| Items | Unit | \$8 | \$10 | \$12 | \$12.50 |
|-----------------|-------|------|------|------|---------|
| Rice | kg | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| Vegetable oil | liter | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Salt | kg | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| Dry Chilli | kg | 0.15 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.25 |
| Red lentils | kg | 0 | 0.5 | 1 | 0.5 |
| Egg | pcs | 0 | 5 | 10 | 11 |
| Onion | kg | 0 | 0.74 | 0.5 | 1 |
| Garlic | kg | 0 | 0 | 0.25 | 0.274 |
| Sugar | kg | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Vegetable | kg | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Broiler chicken | kg | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.4 |

Figure 8: Food consumption score of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi Host Communities (Data Source, REVA-7)



The patterns of food consumption from 2019 to 2023 (Figure 8) reveal significant disparities and evolving dynamics between Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and the local Bangladeshi population:

- *Acceptable Food Consumption:* The local community consistently demonstrates higher levels of acceptable food consumption, beginning at 79% in 2019 and gradually decreasing to 55% by 2023. Conversely, the Rohingya community started at 58% in 2019 but experienced a dramatic decline to merely 30% by 2023. This sharp decrease suggests deteriorating conditions, potentially attributable to ongoing reliance on aid, movement restrictions, and limited employment opportunities.
- *Borderline Category:* The Rohingya community exhibits a notable increase in borderline scores, rising from 38% in 2019 to 60% in 2023, indicating a shift from acceptable to borderline consumption. The local community also showed an upward trend in borderline scores, but the increase gradually increased from 21% to 43%.
- *Poor Food Consumption:* While the local community maintains very low levels of poor food consumption (1-2%), the Rohingya community experiences a significant rise to 10% by 2023, reflecting growing food insecurity. The declining food security among the Rohingya population could be attributed to donor fatigue, employment and movement restrictions, and a lack of integration policies, which likely limit their access to a variety of nutritious foods.

Although the local community also shows signs of stress, possibly owing to the pressures of hosting and economic challenges, it benefits from greater mobility, employment opportunities, and resilience mechanisms, enabling it to sustain a relatively higher level of acceptable consumption.

The disparity in food access between the two communities highlights the burgeoning food security crisis. A 26-year-old female participant from Rajapalong Union articulated the challenges posed by the absence of livelihood support programs:

“In the early years after the influx, cash-for-work and cash-for-training programs helped me support my family. Now, those programs are gone, and my husband has to bear the burden of providing for us alone. It has been difficult not being able to contribute as I used to” (female, 26; Rajapalong Union).

3.7 Economic Impact of Food Insecurity

Declining food availability and rising costs have placed an additional economic burden on both Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox’s Bazar. A key informant involved in food security interventions highlighted the growing challenges in accessing diverse and affordable food options compared with the previous year. He noted that

“People are facing increasing difficulties affording various food options. Host communities, particularly those without assistance, are struggling economically. It is equally concerning for the Rohingya community, as more families are now skipping meals to ensure their children can eat, a situation that has worsened since November 2022.”

Data from food security programs revealed that most households in both the host community and refugee camps rely on coping strategies to survive. These include reducing portions, skipping meals, and consuming less-preferred foods. Funding reductions have severely affected food aid, with transfer values falling short of meeting the needs of the Rohingya population. As a result, food insecurity has become a pressing concern, particularly for refugees whose heavy reliance on aid leaves them vulnerable to any reduction in assistance.

According to REVA-7, in 2023, over 60% of Rohingya households resorted to extreme coping strategies, such as asset depletion, withdrawing children from school, or begging due to ration cuts and limited alternatives. By contrast, 44% of Bangladeshi households avoided extreme measures, although 48% relied on stress-coping mechanisms, including borrowing and selling assets. Both communities prioritized food over non-food expenses, often cutting back on education and health care. Approximately 50% of Rohingya households and 40% of Bangladeshi households borrowed money to meet their basic needs, highlighting ongoing economic challenges. The highest borrowing rates were reported by Cox’s Bazar, particularly for food and healthcare expenses (World Food Program, 2024).

This situation reflects broader systemic issues in the humanitarian response, where funding shortages and logistical challenges frequently result in gaps in food assistance. Food insecurity in Cox’s Bazar mirrors a global trend in which crises amplify vulnerabilities in resource-constrained settings.

4 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the reduction in humanitarian funding has had significant negative impacts on both the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and the host communities in Cox’s Bazar. By applying standard economic security measures such as income, livelihood opportunities, job stability, asset ownership, and coping strategies, this study uncovers a worsening crisis, especially for host communities that lack similar safety nets.

A fundamental aspect of economic security is stable income and access to employment. Both refugees and host community members have experienced a sharp decline in their livelihood opportunities. Among the host communities, wage rates dropped from BDT 550 to as low as BDT 300–350, with 81% of respondents indicating insufficient job availability. Rohingya refugees face similar challenges: over 63% reported a lack of job opportunities, although 20% mentioned occasional work in camp-based, humanitarian roles. However, these marginal employment opportunities are often inconsistent and highly susceptible to funding changes. Job security has also worsened, particularly with the reduction in NGO operations.

Many individuals who previously had regular salaries are now considered “volunteers” with reduced pay and benefits. The shift from stable to precarious employment has led to widespread dissatisfaction and increased psychological stress. Unemployment data further illustrate these trends, with the rate among Rohingyas rising from 34% to 44% between 2022 and 2023 and doubling from 7% to 16% among host communities. In addition to job losses, the erosion of household assets and growing reliance on aid further underscore economic insecurity. Several host families, particularly those leasing land for subsistence farming, lost access to camp settings. As a result, income and land ownership have declined.

For the Rohingya, restricted legal status prevents participation in formal labor markets, deepening their dependence on external assistance.

The REVA-7 data shows that high economic vulnerability among host communities has doubled, from 15% in 2022 to 30% in 2023. In the Rohingya group, 86% of households were classified as highly vulnerable. Without ongoing external support, the resilience of both populations deteriorates rapidly. The proportion of host households living below the Food Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) increased from 3% to 17%, whereas for Rohingya, over 80% remained below the MEB threshold. These indicators show the emergence of a dual crisis that necessitates both immediate and structural responses.

The consequences of funding reductions are equally dire when evaluated through FAO’s four pillars of food security: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability.

- *Food availability:* Cuts in humanitarian ration directly affected food availability. The monthly food allowance per person decreased from \$12.5 to \$8 in 2023, before being partially reinstated. These reductions affected not only the quantity but also the variety of food, leading to decreased access to fresh produce, meat, and protein-rich foods for refugees.
- *Food accessibility:* Access to food has been compromised by inflation, lower incomes, and diminished purchasing power. Rohingya households spent significantly less on food (BDT 1,252 per person) than host households (BDT 3,131), and 72% of the Rohingya households remained below the food expenditure threshold. Host communities grappling with rising prices and stagnant wages also struggle to meet their basic food needs.
- *Food utilization:* The ability to consume a varied and nutritious diet has deteriorated, especially in the Rohingya community. Many households reported reductions in meal frequency and portion size. According to the 2023 Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey, the Global Acute Malnutrition rate among Rohingya children has reached

15.1%, a serious public health concern. This crisis is directly tied to funding cuts, which restrict access to essential items, such as eggs, chickens, and lentils.

- *Food stability*: Food stability is threatened by the communities' reliance on humanitarian aid. Given global funding challenges, the temporary restoration of the \$12.5 food ration is not assured to continue. Any future reduction could endanger household nutrition and worsen malnutrition and hunger, particularly in the absence of sustainable livelihood options and policy-level support for local integration.

This study underscores the notion that declining humanitarian funding has disrupted not only material conditions such as income and food access but also social cohesion and personal dignity. Economic and food security interconnection reveals cyclical vulnerability: economic marginalization reduces food access, whereas food insecurity undermines the ability to seek and maintain livelihoods. Without a multiyear investment in employment, infrastructure, nutrition, and psychosocial resilience, both host and refugee communities are trapped in a prolonged crisis. Sustainable support and burden sharing at the international level are crucial to breaking this cycle.

These findings are consistent with this study's theoretical foundations. Sen's Capability Approach as discussed by Wells (2011) is particularly relevant to understanding how reduced aid limits income and people's ability to lead meaningful and secure lives. Declining food rations and employment opportunities directly diminish individual freedom and capabilities, especially for marginalized groups.

These results also resonate with the Relative Deprivation Theory, as host communities increasingly perceive themselves as unfairly neglected. Despite having access to national systems, many feel worse off than aid-supported refugees do, contributing to social friction and weakening inter-group solidarity.

The Burden-Sharing Theory provides additional insights into the structural imbalance identified in this study. The projected funding shortfall, anticipated to reach 47% by 2024, exemplifies the international community's failure to fulfill its collective responsibility concerning the Rohingya crisis. Without increased financial support from wealthier nations, the strain on Bangladesh remains unsustainable, as Betts (2009) and Rashid (2020) noted. These findings are consistent with those of broader global research. Talukder (2022) and Ahmad and Naeem (2020) documented the adverse effects of forced migration on host economies, particularly through declining wages and heightened competition. Similarly, Ullah et al. (2021) observed a 24% reduction in income and a 39% decrease in land ownership among host households following a refugee influx. Regarding food security, evidence from Anwar et al. (2023) and Abdullah et al. (2018) confirms that reductions in aid exacerbate nutritional deficiencies and increase food insecurity among refugee populations.

One surprising finding from this study is that even with aid, some Rohingya participants experienced a decrease in self-esteem and dignity due to their restricted social roles and economic reliance. This psychological impact underscores the limitations of solely providing material aid and indicates the need for more comprehensive support, including community involvement and mental health services. This study offers valuable insights into humanitarian policy discussions, particularly concerning aid dependency, social tension, and the sustainability of humanitarian models. The dual crisis faced by refugees and hosts in Cox's Bazar reflects similar situations in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and

Uganda, where displaced populations and host communities vie for scarce resources in under-resourced settings. These similarities highlight the importance of inclusive, development-oriented humanitarian responses. This study aligns with its objectives by examining diminishing aid's effects on the economy and food security. Both qualitative and quantitative data revealed worsening economic marginalization, increasing food insecurity, and reliance on harmful coping mechanisms. Although centered on Cox's Bazar, the findings have broader implications for other prolonged displacement contexts worldwide, especially those with limited donor support and refugee legal protection.

The study's findings demonstrate clear connections to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). The significant decline in livelihood opportunities, reduced wages, and growing dependence on aid have exacerbated multidimensional poverty among both Rohingya refugees and host communities, directly threatening progress toward SDG 1. At the same time, food insecurity has worsened due to ration cuts, limited dietary diversity, and inflation.

The fact that 72% of Rohingya households fall below the food expenditure threshold, coupled with a 15.1% Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate, highlights a severe breach of SDG 2 targets related to hunger and nutrition. Health-related vulnerabilities have also deteriorated. This study highlights psychological stress, increasing malnutrition, and limited access to healthcare, all of which hinder the achievement of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Regarding employment, the crisis affected the availability of decent work, particularly among youths who left school for now-discontinued NGO jobs. This regression in employment opportunities undermines SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) was also at risk. Host communities increasingly perceive aid as unequally distributed, fueling resentment and social friction. Finally, the growing humanitarian funding gap of 47% in 2024 reflects insufficient progress on SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), pointing to stronger global cooperation and burden sharing. These findings illustrate how local humanitarian crises, when underfunded, can obstruct global development targets, reinforcing the need for integrated and sustained responses aligned with the SDGs.

However, several limitations of this study must be acknowledged. Purposive sampling, suitable for in-depth community analysis, introduces selection bias and limits generalizability.

The geographic focus on Ukhiya and Teknaf excludes other areas such as Bhasan Char, which may present different dynamics. Additionally, time and resource constraints limited the number of focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Finally, the study's cross-sectional design captures conditions at a single point, making it difficult to assess long-term trends or seasonal variations.

5 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be derived from this study's findings:

- *Maintain and boost humanitarian funding:* Immediate advocacy is essential to tackling the funding shortfall. Donors and international stakeholders should focus on long-term, multi-year pledges to guarantee the ongoing aid provision.

- *Strengthen livelihood initiatives*: Provide inclusive livelihood support to refugees and host communities by providing vocational training, cash-for-work opportunities, a skill development program, and micro-enterprise grants.
- *Prioritize nutrition-sensitive aid allocation*: Ensure that food assistance meets the minimum dietary requirements and supports nutritional adequacy. Adjusting rations based on inflation and population is needed to prevent deterioration in malnutrition rates.
- *Foster social cohesion*: Launching community-driven projects offers mutual advantages, easing tensions between hosts and refugees through shared services and development.
- *Broaden food assistance*: Modify food aid to align with dietary requirements and inflation, incorporating fresh produce and nutritional education.
- *Advocate policy on burden sharing*: Facilitate participatory governance at the local level by empowering both host and refugee communities to actively engage in planning and decision-making in host communities and the Rohingya refugee camp. This encompasses initiatives for local conflict resolution, community representation, and the inclusive implementation of development policies.

Recent policy changes, such as the cessation of USAID funding, present a considerable threat to ongoing humanitarian initiatives. Given that U.S. funding constitutes a significant portion of the food assistance budget, any reduction could exacerbate malnutrition and disrupt livelihoods. These developments highlight the necessity for diversified multi-donor strategies and contingency planning in humanitarian operations.

6 Conclusion

This study thoroughly analyzes the effects of declining humanitarian aid on the economic and food security of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar region. This study uses quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate that funding reductions leads to limited livelihood opportunities, decreased food access, and intensified social tension. The study highlights alarming levels of economic hardship and food insecurity in both communities, with 72% of the Rohingya and a growing number of host households falling below the food expenditure thresholds. These outcomes stem from funding cuts, which have led to reduced employment, diminished purchasing power, increased competition, and decreased availability of essential services.

The sharp reduction in food rations, initially from \$12.5 to \$8 in 2023, has had immediate consequences on household food consumption and nutrition, contributing to malnutrition. As humanitarian funding shrinks, the evidence underscores the importance of preserving core food assistance to avert further health and social deterioration. Long-term neglect of nutritional needs escalates the crisis from food insecurity to a full-blown public health emergency.

This is significant because, without adequate support, both communities face the risk of long-term marginalization, creating a dual crisis that threatens regional stability and human security. These findings suggest shifting from short-term humanitarian efforts to a sustainable, equity-focused response strategy. Stakeholders must collaborate to build inclusive systems that balance relief with development, ensure refugee protection, and strengthen host community resilience.

Future research directions could particularly be devoted to:

- *Longitudinal studies*: Future research should adopt longitudinal methodologies to track economic and food security trends over time and assess the effectiveness of various interventions.
- *Comparative studies*: Conducting comparative analyses across different refugee-hosting regions in Bangladesh, such as Bhasan Char or other districts, will enhance the generalizability of the findings. Gender and Youth Dynamics: More focused investigations into gender-specific impacts and youth perspectives could reveal additional vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms.
- *Environmental and infrastructure impact*: Examining how reduced aid affects environmental sustainability and infrastructure services in host areas is essential. Additionally, digital innovation should be considered to improve aid distribution and economic participation among refugees.

References

- Abdullah, A., Rifat, M. A., Hasan, M. T., Manir, M. Z., Khan, M. M. M., & Azad, F. (2018). Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices, household food security, and nutritional status of under-five children in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. *Current Research in Nutrition and Food Services*, 6(3). [https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Infant-and-Young-Child-Feeding-\(IYCF\)-Practices%2C-of-Abdullah-Rifat/921a75bfa9d500b3a04da34d2f49b51a2250caa5](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Infant-and-Young-Child-Feeding-(IYCF)-Practices%2C-of-Abdullah-Rifat/921a75bfa9d500b3a04da34d2f49b51a2250caa5)
- Acharya, A. (2014). Human security. In J. Baylis, S. Smith, & P. Owens (Eds.), *The globalization of world politics* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339956544_Human_Security
- Ahmad, S. M., & Naeem, N. (2020). Adverse economic impact of Rohingya refugees on Bangladesh: Some way forward. *Semanticscholar*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Adverse-Economic-Impact-by-Rohingya-Refugees-on-Way-Ahmad-Naeem/eafa4c2adade42c045f0e4e783a727a3150d9926>
- Ansar, A., & Khaled, A. F. M. (2021). From solidarity to resistance: Host communities' evolving response to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Humanitarian Action*, 6(16). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00104-9>
- Anwar, A., Ali, ARM. M., Yadav, U. N., Huda, M. N., Rizwan, A. A. M., Parray, A. A., Sarma, H., Halima, O., Saha, N. Shuvo, S. D., Mondal, P. K., Shamim, A. A., & Mistry, S. K. (2023). Promotion of livelihood opportunities to address food insecurity in the Rohingya refugee camps of Bangladesh. *Global Public Health*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2023.2295446>
- Albert, E., & Maizland, L. (2020). *The Rohingya crisis*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis>
- As, R., & Handana, M. H. A. (2022). Managing the COVID-19 pandemic: Health and food security of Rohingya refugees at Kutupalong Camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. *Jurnal Sentris*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Managing-The-COVID-19-Pandemic%3A-Health-and-Food-of-As-Handana/5203af5f40600ce53667b76396b2a7a14e7d3908>
- Betts, A. (2009). *Forced migration and global politics*. John Wiley & Sons. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Forced+Migration+and+Global+Politics-p-9781444315868>
- Faye, M. (2021). A forced migration from Myanmar to Bangladesh and beyond: Humanitarian response to Rohingya refugee crisis. *International Journal of Humanitarian Action*, 6(13). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00098-4>
- Ferris, E., & Kerwin, D. (2023). Durable displacement and the protracted search for solutions: Promising programs and strategies. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 11(1), 3-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23315024231160454>

- Filipski, M. J., Rosenbach, G., Tiburcio, E., Dorosh, P., & Hoddinott, J. (2021). Refugees who mean business: Economic activities in and around the Rohingya settlements in Bangladesh. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34(1), 1202-1242. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa059>
- Islam, M. N., & Rahman, M. H. (2018). The humanitarian question of the Rohingya Muslim refugee crisis beyond the foreign policy of Bangladesh and Myanmar. *ResearchGate*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357539350>
- Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). (2024). *Bangladesh: Rohingya humanitarian crisis joint response plan 2024 funding update (as of July 31, 2024)*. https://rohingyaresponse.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024_08_18_JRP-2024_Funding-update_FTS_as-of-31-July.pdf
- Islam, M., Ahmed, B., Sammonds, P., Chakma, A., Patwary, O., Durrat, F., & Alam, M. S. (2022). The 2017 Rohingya influx into Bangladesh and its implications for the host communities. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 10(2), 487-512. <https://doi.org/10.18588/202211.00a294>
- Jahan, N. (2023, June 3). Supporting the extremely poor in Cox's Bazar. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/supporting-the-extreme-poor-coxs-bazar-3341996>
- Newman, A., Macaulay, L., & Dunwoodie, K. (2024). Refugee entrepreneurship: A systematic review of prior research and agenda for future research. *International Migration Review*, 58(3), 1140-1171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183231182669>
- Khaled, A. F. M. (2021). Do no harm in refugee humanitarian aid: The case of the Rohingya humanitarian response. *International Journal of Humanitarian Action*, 6(7). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00093-9>
- Korobi, S. A. (2023, March 19). *Declining funds and food for the Rohingya*. New Age. <https://www.newagebd.net/article/197176/declining-funds-food-for-rohingyas>
- Oxfam. (2023). Still too important to fail: Addressing the humanitarian financing gap in an era of escalating climate impacts. Oxfam International. <https://devinit.org/resources/still-too-important-to-fail/>
- Pressé, D., & Thomson, J. (2008). The resettlement challenge: Integration of refugees from protracted refugee situations. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 25(1), 94-99. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.21402>
- Palma, P. (2021, August 18). *Funding on decline, challenges up*. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/funding-decline-challenges-2160016>
- Rahman, S. A. (2023). *Rohingya crisis: The picture of the fund crisis and its impact on Bangladesh*. Modern Diplomacy. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/01/12/rohingya-crisis-the-picture-of-fund-crisis-and-its-impacts-on-bangladesh/>
- Rashid, S. R. (2020). Finding a durable solution to Bangladesh's Rohingya refugee problem: Policies, prospects and politics. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 5(2), 174-189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057891119883700>
- Robeyns, I. (2005). The capability approach: A theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(1), 93-117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/146498805200034266>
- Rohingya Refugee Response. (2024). *Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh*. <https://rohingyaresponse.org/>
- Runciman, W. G. (1966). Relative deprivation and social justice. *Routledge*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/589189>
- Seppälä, T., Nykänen, T., Koikkalainen, S., Mikkonen, E., & Rainio, M. (2020). In-between space/time: Affective exceptionality during the 'refugee crisis' in Northern Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 10(1), 87-105. <https://doi.org/10.2478/njmr-2019-0029>
- Sadat al Sajib, S. M., Islam, S. A. M. Z., & Sohad, M. K. N. (2022). Rohingya influx and socio-environmental crisis in southeastern Bangladesh. *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*, 4(1), 89-103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25166026211067604>
- Schiffbauer, M., Hussain, S., & Sahnoun, H. (2015). Jobs or privileges: Unleashing the employment potential of the Middle East and North Africa. *World Bank*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/jobs-or-privileges-unleashing-the-employment-potential-of-the-middle-east-and-north-africa>

- Talukder, M. I. A. (2022). Are refugees a blessing or a curse: An analysis of the economic impact of Rohingya refugees on Bangladesh since the exodus. In K. Bülbül, M. N. Islam, M. S. Khan (Eds.), *Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Myanmar*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Are-Refugees-a-Blessing-or-a-Curse%3A-An-Analysis-of-Talukder/098995b290f84f9994eebaea26dea834aa1e9a7e>
- Tasci, Z., & Ahmed, R. (2022). Equitable access to healthcare: Identifying barriers to refugee access during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Communication in Healthcare*, 16(1), 58–61. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Equitable-access-to-healthcare%3A-identifying-for-to-Tasci-Ahmed/fc1a1fba35389d118b2e22fb0cc37c549d85069b>
- Uddin, N. (2018, January 9). 'A life of football': The vulnerabilities of Rohingya caught between Myanmar and Bangladesh. LSE South Asia Blog. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2018/01/09/a-life-of-football-the-vulnerabilities-of-rohingya-caught-between-myanmar-and-bangladesh/>
- Ullah, S. M. A., Asahiro, K., Moriyama, M., & Tani, M. (2021). Socioeconomic status changes of the host communities after the Rohingya refugee influx in the southern coastal area of Bangladesh. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4240. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084240>
- UN OCHA. (2023, February 16). *Bangladesh: UN experts appeal for immediate funding to avert food ration cuts for Rohingya refugees*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/bangladesh-un-experts-appeal-immediate-funding-avert-food-ration-cuts>
- UNHCR. (2023). *Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS): Final executive summary*. [https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/unhcr-bangladesh-2023-standardized-expanded-nutrition-survey-sens-final-executive-summary#:~:text=SUMMARY%20OF%20THE%202023%20SENS%20FINDINGS%3A&text=The%202023%20SENS%20results%20indicate,in%20Registered%20Camps%20\(9.6%25\)](https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/unhcr-bangladesh-2023-standardized-expanded-nutrition-survey-sens-final-executive-summary#:~:text=SUMMARY%20OF%20THE%202023%20SENS%20FINDINGS%3A&text=The%202023%20SENS%20results%20indicate,in%20Registered%20Camps%20(9.6%25))
- UNDP. (1994). *Human development report 1994: New dimensions of human security*. <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-1994>
- Wells, T. (2011). Sen's capability approach. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://iep.utm.edu/sen-cap/>
- World Food Programme. (2023, September 18). *WFP Bangladesh country brief*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/wfp-bangladesh-country-brief-august-2023>
- World Food Programme. (2024, July 8). *Bangladesh: Refugee influx emergency vulnerability assessment (REVA-7) report*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-refugee-influx-emergency-vulnerability-assessment-reva-7-report-july-2024>