

# In search of dignified life, durable solutions, and sustainable development: case studies of IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingyas in Bangladesh

Palash Kamruzzaman, Kate Williams, Ali Wardak, Emma Chivers

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Centre for Social Policy  
University of South Wales



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## Acronyms

<b>BSA</b>	British Sociological Association
<b>BSC</b>	British Society of Criminology
<b>FFM</b>	UN Human Rights Council’s Fact-Finding Mission
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GIRoA</b>	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>ICG</b>	International Crisis Group
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>JISC</b>	Joint Information Systems Committee
<b>NATO</b>	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>OHCHR</b>	(United Nations) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>SDGs</b>	sustainable development goals
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<b>Tk</b>	Taka (Bangladesh currency)
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>UNHRC</b>	UN Human Rights Council
<b>USW</b>	University of South Wales
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

## Executive summary

This study focuses on dignity because sustainable development requires just institutions, alleviating poverty, education etc. all of which are central to dignity. Focusing on dignity also permitted the perspective of those in need to come to the fore, the study capture how they view a 'good' life or a positive and sustainable future, one in which their well-being is protected. The study tracked the experiences of the IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingyas from Rakhine, Myanmar, it traced their dignity journey from their homes to the camps or other settlements where they were now living. In doing this it achieved a number of outcomes: (1) delivered a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced; (2) created the knowledge necessary to improve the just and dignified delivery of support necessary to sustain displaced persons and their communities and potentially other displaced and refugee communities in the world; (3) explored practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives (both short-term and more durable); and (4) highlighted the multidimensional support necessary to help the IDPs and Rohingyas to return to their places of origin, resettle elsewhere, or integrate into their host communities.

### The Displacement Journeys

The research found that there were multiple reasons why IDPs had been displaced. Though most were displaced due to conflict and war, natural disaster and poverty accounted for some displacement. Most conflict induced IDPs experienced severe violence and traumatic events both before and during migration, and many are unable to return to their places of origin due to ongoing conflict, meaning that many had been displaced over a protracted period.

Rohingya refugees reported that in Myanmar they were deprived of a dignified life: they were denied freedom of religion; they had little freedom of movement; little access to education and no certification of education; rights to marry and register births were restricted; they could not have a-walled gardens so protecting the dignity of women was restricted. Over many years the Rohingya people faced institutional 'racism' and discrimination which often surfaced as violence including sexual abuse, rape, torture, confiscation of land etc. In 2017 the attacks forced the Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. The 2017 'clearance operation' was systematic and orchestrated by the Myanmar military but local Buddhists ('Mogh') were also involved. The operation included mass murder and torture, targeted raids/attacks to Rohingya villages, burning whole villages, violence against women (including sexual violence and mutilation). They were chased down and attacked by the military and local Moghs all the way to the Bangladesh border, to make sure they left.

Interestingly, despite the extreme violence/conditions suffered by IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingya refugees quite a few stated that they had managed to preserve their dignity in spite of the violence and poverty that they had suffered. It is likely that those who felt their dignity was preserved focused more on their inner dignity and that gave them resilience, whereas those who suffered a loss of dignity focused more on social dignity and felt degraded (Kateb, 2011). Apart from this inner sense of dignity which helped both the IDPs and Rohingyas to obtain a strong sense of communal identity and resilience, most participants acknowledged that their dignity was undermined due to their experience of violence and displacement. For the IDPs, *karāma* (dignity, honour, respect and high status in Arabic, cultural values: see Kandiwali, 2019), *ghairat* (zeal) *nang -wa-namos* (protection of family – especially women -

and its property) or *izzat -wa- abro* (respect, prestige, status) were particularly badly affected. Whereas most Rohingyas reported feelings of total loss of dignity along with loss of everything else – life, liberty, control over sexual acts, property, land.

### **Conceptualisations of Dignity**

The main focus of this study is to understand how the IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh conceptualise dignity through their lived experiences. The traditional top-down conceptualisation of dignity (Patrick and Simpson, 2019) often ignores the importance, experience and perception of dignity (and loss of it) from the perspective of the 'victim' group. This study avoided that and offers important critical insight in realising how the displaced view a good and dignified life for a positive future in which their wellbeing needs to be protected.

Drawing on their lived experiences in displacement and experiencing violence along the way, the IDPs and the Rohingyas conceptualised dignity in multiple different ways. For example, the IDPs delineated dignity specifically in terms of:

- access to their basic needs (such as food, water, and shelter);
- prosperity and wealth;
- self-reliance and self-sufficiency;
- protection of their lives, homes, and families;
- peace, safety and security;
- freedom and rights;
- mutual respect and compassion;
- religion and Islamic values; and
- education

The displaced Rohingya refugees in Bangladeshi camps had a similar complex conception of dignity, they described dignity in terms of:

- Safety
- Identity
- Religion
- Knowledge, education (ilm)
- Wealth, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency
- Solidarity and mutual respect

We contend that the IDPs' and Rohingya conception of dignity was clearly shaped by the violence and/or persecution they suffered over an extended period while living in their homes. Their views are also influenced by the patriarchal values of Afghan and Rohingya culture. This report shows that there are some common features of dignity among the IDPs and Rohingya perception of dignity, namely:

- Safety, and protection from violence and sexual abuse
- Compassion, solidarity, and mutual respect
- Religious and cultural values
- Wealth, prosperity and self-reliance
- Knowledge and education (ilm)



In addition to the commonalities evident in both the IDPs and Rohingya conceptualisation of dignity, this study also identified contextual differences in understanding how the IDPs and Rohingyas perceive and describe dignity. These include peace and security; identity, freedom and rights; and shelter, food and basic needs (see Chapter-4, for more details).

The evidence provided in this study builds on the emerging literature that explains dignity in displacement (see Holloway and Fan, 2018; Kandiwal, 2019). While some aspects such as social; religious; and economic dimensions of dignity (see Holloway and Fan, 2018) can be useful, evidence of this study demonstrate that one's safety (including protection from sexual violence), identity, desire to live a peaceful life; aspiration to achieve knowledge and education, requirement of a decent home and other basic needs, and freedom/human rights can also form key components of dignity in a given context as perceived through their lived experiences.

In contrast, humanitarian actors and senior government staff mainly conceptualised dignity in terms of respect and human rights and gave less emphasis to the roles of education, independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency in protecting and restoring the dignity of the IDPs and the Rohingyas. These differences may be explained by the reliance of humanitarian workers on traditional top-down conceptualisation of dignity (Patrick and Simpson, 2019) rather than gathering or reporting on the affected communities' lived experiences or their views and perspectives on dignity (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway, 2018). Clearly, the IDPs and Rohingyas drew on their lived experiences, and community and cultural perspectives of dignity, and this difference in perspective impacted on humanitarian support for the IDPs and Rohingyas.

### **Provision of Aid**

In terms of the aid received by IDPs, the majority of IDPs were not satisfied with the humanitarian assistance provided, often describing the aid received as inadequate, insufficient, and inconsistent with their real needs. They reported that not all IDPs who are entitled to receive aid do so, and some vulnerable groups such as disabled people, widows, and the very poor and needy miss out on aid. In addition, many IDPs felt that their dignity was not protected when they were receiving aid, mainly due to chaotic procedures, lack of concern for their culture, religion and values, abuse and mistreatment by staff, and corruption in the distribution of aid. IDPs who felt that their dignity had been harmed were reluctant to complain or to report abuse using a formal complaints mechanism, as in many cases they feared what might happen.

For the displaced Rohingyas refugees in Bangladeshi camps, the humanitarian actors focused on the provision of necessities such as food, water, shelter, sanitation, and hygiene. The humanitarian actors felt their support met the most basic needs of the Rohingyas and humanitarian workers were largely polite and respectful towards the Rohingyas. Some humanitarian workers tried whenever possible to use the Rohingya language, exchanging respectful greetings and listen to individuals in order to show that they valued the Rohingya people. These ways of working were particularly important if aid workers wanted to persuade the Rohingyas that something like modern medical treatment or using proper hygiene for menstrual cloths in the camps was of value to their well-being (Farzana, 2017). It was also very important if trying to persuade particularly vulnerable individuals that they should seek support (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). However, they recognised that there was room for

improvement and strove to deliver it, for example, the WFP increased the food options from 3 to 19 but they also thought that overall, they were covering what needed to be provided. Some international and local NGOs recognised that education was important to the Rohingyas, they also recognised its importance to sustainable development and so some have worked hard to find ways to improve the education provided to Rohingya children and to draw the issue to the attention of the Bangladeshi authorities in order to try to find a solution (Human Rights Watch, 2019). There was another concern the humanitarian actors felt the Rohingya might face, something that might cause a diminution in the way in which they were treated. It was feared that in time there would be aid fatigue on the part of international funders which would risk a significant reduction in the services delivered. They therefore recognised the increasingly precarious situation the Rohingyas were in, particularly if their ability to earn cash money continued to be curtailed.

### **Future Solutions**

As conflict and war was identified as the main reasons for the internal displacement in Afghanistan, understandably peacebuilding was recognised as a main challenge towards a dignified solution for the IDPs. That peace is elusive and whilst humanitarian provision tries to support IDP, overall, much more needs to be done to develop durable and sustainable solutions for the many problems and challenges experienced by IDPs in Afghanistan. IDPs have called for development support in the following ten areas:

- (1) the provision of land and sustainable shelter, including access to water, sanitation and energy (SDG Goals 1.4, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 11.1, 11.3);
- (2) construction of clinics, schools, and capacity building centres (SDG Goals 1.4, 3.8, 4.a, 7.1, 9.1, 11);
- (3) construction of roads, factories, and power stations (SDG Goals 7.1, 9);
- (4) restoration of houses, roads, land, drinking water and sanitation (SDG Goals 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 9.1, 11.2);
- (5) agricultural assistance (SDG Goals 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 2.a, 9.3);
- (6) education for children (SDG Goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7);
- (7) the provision of employment opportunities (SDG Goals 2.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5);
- (8) capital for business investment (SDG Goals 8, 9.2, 9.3);
- (9) skills development and training (SDG Goals 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.5); and
- (10) peacebuilding and provision of safe and secure environments (SDG Goals 5.5, 11.1, the whole of goal 16 but in particular 16.1, 16.2, 16.3)

In the context of displaced Rohingya refugees, the continuity of the crisis without a safe and dignified solution on the horizon seem to have caused major frustrations for the Rohingyas, the Government of Bangladesh and some humanitarian actors. The current situation is problematic because:

- it is encouraging a dependency culture which the Rohingyas feel undermines their dignity, they want to be self-sufficient;
- the host community feel unjustly treated;
- the pressures on the local environment, and wildlife are vast and could have far-reaching consequences;

- funding to support on-going aid and improve services is dwindling.

All of these mean that a more permanent and long-term solution is necessary. All parties – the Rohingya, the Bangladesh Government, the aid agencies, and the international community – agree that the permanent resolution of the problem would be the voluntary return of the Rohingya to their homelands in Rakhine, Myanmar, as full citizens of Myanmar. The only real opposition to this comes from within Myanmar.

The Rohingyas have called for development support in the following areas:

1. the provision of land in Rakhine and of sustainable shelter, including access to water, sanitation and energy so they can re-build their communities (SDG Goals 1.4, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 11.1, 11.3);
2. construction of clinics (or access to already existing clinics), schools, and capacity building centres (SDG Goals 1.4, 3.8, 4.a, 7.1, 9.1, 11);
3. construction of destroyed infrastructure and that necessary to building sustainable lives in Rakhine, Myanmar, such as roads, factories, and power stations (SDG Goals 7.1, 9);
4. restoration of houses, roads (where necessary and/or where destroyed), land, drinking water and sanitation (SDG Goals 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 9.1, 11.2);
5. agricultural assistance (SDG Goals 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 2.a, 9.3);
6. education for children (SDG Goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7);
7. the provision of employment opportunities (SDG Goals 2.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5);
8. capital for business investment (in farms, shops and other traditional businesses as well as possibly in new business ventures) (SDG Goals 8, 9.2, 9.3);
9. skills development and training (for traditional and new employment) so they are able to take up the employment opportunities (SDG Goals 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.5); and
10. peacebuilding and provision of safe and secure environments in Rakhine (SDG Goals 5.5, 11.1, the whole of goal 16 but in particular 16.1, 16.2, 16.3)

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

As manifested in this study, the IDPs in Afghanistan and the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, based on their lived experience, were capable of identifying the main challenges and prospective ways forward. Based on their views, we recommend the following for policy practices.

#### ***For the IDPs in Afghanistan***

- Rather than relying on top-down conceptualisations of dignity, humanitarian actors should seek to understand what dignity means to the affected communities and how to uphold IDPs dignity based on the views and perspectives of IDPs themselves.
- Humanitarian organisations must aim for a more timely and consistent response to conflict, drought, and other natural disasters in Afghanistan, with more frequent assistance and enough aid to at least fulfil each families' basic daily requirements.

- Humanitarian and government organisations should focus on sustainable development activities and creating income-generating opportunities in rural drought-affected areas and poverty-stricken areas in order to prevent people from migrating from these areas in the first place.
- In terms of the provision of education, particular attention should be paid to education for girls, who face additional cultural barriers in accessing educational facilities.
- Particular attention should be paid to providing a greater level of psychosocial support for IDPs, particularly those affected by conflict, war and violence, including children.
- Humanitarian workers should ensure that vulnerable groups such as widows are able to receive aid safely, taking into account cultural norms and practices and recognising that single women may be at risk of gender-based violence, sexual violence, discrimination or persecution if required to leave their homes alone.
- Overall, Afghanistan needs to be at peace, without wars and conflicts.

***For the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees who are currently living in Bangladesh:***

- Rather than relying on top-down conceptualisations of dignity, humanitarian actors should seek to understand what dignity means to the affected communities and how to uphold the Dignity of the Rohingya people based on the views and perspectives of the Rohingya themselves.
- There is an immediate need to improve the provision of education and of educational certificates. Education should be provided equally to boys and girls.
- Employment opportunities need to be increased now, even whilst the Rohingya are living in the camps. It is only in this way that they will be able to become self-sufficient, something which is core to their *maan-shomman* [honour and status].
- Within the camps, women and girls should also be supported to work outside the home if that is what they choose and if it will increase their feelings of self-worth and dignity. Not only should opportunities be designed in prestigious industries for women (some, though not all, might be in women only work environments) but also cultural education should take place to show why this is important and why Rohingya women should be free to work outside the home. This is particularly necessary at the moment as so many of the Rohingya live in women headed households.
- There needs to be greater access to employment now to provide greater access to cash so the lives of the Rohingya will be enriched as they will be able to choose which food and other products they buy.
- Particular attention should be paid to providing a greater level of psychosocial support for Rohingya refugees all of whom have been affected by violence and degradation. There needs to be specialist provision for children and greater specialist provision for women, particularly those whose *ijiot* has been attacked by being raped or sexually attacked.
- Humanitarian workers and the government representatives working in the Cox's Bazar area should ensure that vulnerable groups such as women and children do not fall prey to offenders who sexually abuse and/or traffic them.
- Sanitation needs to be improved in the camps to ensure that even during the monsoon there is not open sewage in the camps.

- In the longer term the Rohingya need to be awarded citizenship and full rights, preferably in the Rakhine region of Myanmar though if that does not prove possible then in other states.
- Wherever they find a permanent home they need:
  - to be citizens
  - their peace and security to be guaranteed by means of a peace-keeping force if necessary;
  - a peace and reconciliation type restorative process;
  - everything necessary to a sustainable future.

Finally, and in appreciation of what the Bangladesh Government and people have done in hosting the Rohingya there needs to be aid for sustainable development of the host community in Cox's Bazar to ensure that they do not suffer long-term and to ensure that the sustainable development of Bangladesh is not negatively impacted in the long-term.

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction: research context, objectives, and methods**

## 1.1 Introduction

The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan along with the forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar who are currently living in congested Bangladeshi camps represent two of the most vulnerable groups of people in the world today. This research primarily explores how the IDPs in Afghanistan and forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh perceive dignity and the ways in which their dignity has been preserved or diminished through their experiences of violence and persecution and their displacement journeys.

In the 2020 Global trends forced displacement report, the UNHCR (2020 a) insists that when considering only international displacement situations under UNHCR's mandate, Afghanistan is ranked third in the world (after Syria and Venezuela) with 2.8 million IDPs. As per Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2021), there were 3,547,000 IDPs in Afghanistan by the end of 2020. However, in the wake of foreign troop withdrawal and Taliban advances, an updated UNHCR estimate suggests that additional 270,000 people have become internally displaced since January 2021 bringing the total number of IDPs to more than 3.5 million (UNHCR, 2021). Afghanistan has been mired in decades of protracted conflicts and frequent climate emergencies, including droughts and flooding. The ongoing conflicts can be traced back to the beginning of the civil war that started in 1978 between the anti-communist guerrillas – the Mujahideen - and the Afghan Marxist government, aided by Soviet occupying forces from 1979 to 1989. During the last 44 years, displacement has been a constant occurrence and has become a complex, acute, fluid, and protracted phenomena driven by a variety of multifaceted factors including violence, drought, and natural disasters (such as floods, earthquakes, and avalanches). Most displaced people live in major neighbouring regions and large cities, such as Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul, which have higher-than-average employment and business prospects than other areas. In Afghanistan, the majority of displaced people live in informal settlements and non-official camps near or among the local communities. Aid organisations have been actively and independently leading aid distribution throughout the country and have acted as independent and parallel structures to the government. Aside from emergency aid provided by the international community, social welfare in Afghanistan is traditionally structured on family, tribal and ethnic lines, and therefore there is a local custom of support in the community. Where families are displaced, they are uprooted from these traditional sources of community provision and many are left without support. A similar outcome can arise where too many people in a community need such support.

Forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who are currently living in Bangladesh constitute another vulnerable and victimised group of people. As of 31 July 2020, there are 860,494 Rohingyas now living in Bangladeshi camps in Cox's Bazar (UNHCR, 2020 b). The total number includes 35,060 Rohingya from pre-2016 who reside in the registered camps in Cox's Bazar but excludes some of the Rohingya living in host communities and in certain locations beyond the camp boundaries who may not have been included in the family counting exercise by the Government of Bangladesh and the UNHCR. Nevertheless, the official estimate suggests that almost 90% of the Rohingya people registered in the Asia-Pacific region are being hosted in Bangladesh.

For at least the past five decades, the Rohingya in Myanmar had become victims of state crime, ethnic discrimination and suppression (Alam, 2019). By amending citizenship laws in 1982, Myanmar's military junta refused its long-term Rohingya population citizenship rights and imposed restrictions on their travel, educational and employment opportunities within Myanmar (Jones, 2017). Over at least 40 years, amongst other abuses, the Rohingya people in Myanmar were also frequently exposed to forced labour, eviction and detention. In August 2017, a deadly crackdown by Myanmar's military and security forces compelled about a million to flee from Myanmar and seek temporary shelter in Cox's Bazar, a bordering district of Bangladesh (Human Rights Council, 2019). The Rohingya described this campaign as organized violence jointly committed by Myanmar military, border guards, police, and rival ethnic communities (mainly local Buddhist clergy and their followers) in the Rakhine region of the country (Haar et al., 2019). This organised violence included mass shooting, burning of humans and their houses, sexual violence, executions and dumping of bodies in mass graves in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung Townships in the Northern Rakhine (Haar et al., 2019; Fortify Rights, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2017). The Myanmar Government denied any role in committing mass violence and crimes against Rohingya population (South China Morning Post, 2017). However, the United Nation Independent Facts Findings report (2018) accused Myanmar of carrying out a brutal campaign against unarmed Rohingya civilians across Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States, the security campaign was also described as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, addressing the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, UNHRC, 2018).

These two groups of vulnerable individuals formed the bases of the research to consider the effects of these events on their dignity and on how improvements to their lives might be achieved.

## **1.2 Study Objective**

The overall objective of this study was to understand the experience of violence and loss of dignity among the IDPs in Afghanistan and displaced Rohingyas who fled Myanmar in 2017 and who are currently living in Bangladesh. This research focuses on understanding:

- the impetus for the displacement of the IDPs in Afghanistan and the Rohingyas to Bangladesh;
- their experience of discrimination, persecution and violence and/or of natural disasters leading up to their displacement;
- the effects of displacement on their lives, their dignity, their feelings of belonging and independence;
- how displacement has impacted on the culture and heritage which might have given their lives shape and meaning;
- how the IDPs and Rohingyas now live and whether living in camps and/or reliance on humanitarian support has impacted on their perceptions of dignity;



- how the humanitarian actors who are supporting the IDPs and Rohingyas conceptualise dignity, particularly in delivering aid and other support for these groups
- how the IDPs and Rohingyas as well as the humanitarian actors and respective governments see the futures of the IDPs and the Rohingyas; and what is being and might be done to address their situation.

The study highlights what realistic changes will make a positive difference to leading or ensuring safe and peaceful lives for IDPs and Rohingyas where they are treated with dignity, justice and equality. In particular, this research aims to offer critical insights about the ways in which they can be supported to move out of poverty and re-build (or build new) healthy self-sufficient and sustainable lives and communities.

A focus on dignity was chosen because it permits both a balanced and forward-looking approach that might mend the schisms in the lives of both IDPs in Afghanistan and refugees in Bangladesh. It is a focus which can have relevance out with these two cases and one which embraces many of the SDGs such as just institutions, alleviating poverty, education etc. Academic literature and policy discourses exhibit a growing interest in human dignity and how it should be understood (Neal, 2014). While these provide a useful background for understanding dignity in displacement in general, a real insight into the debate requires a systematic exploration of how the IDPs and the Rohingyas themselves interpret it. Dignity is recognized as a basic human right in all documents concerning fundamental human rights. The concept 'dignity' is also widely recognized in the discussion of justice (Misztal, 2012), medical care (Bennett, 2016; Brundtland, 2003), occupational safety (Thomas and Lucas, 2018) and in humanitarian actions (WFP, 2017) amongst other areas. However, there is a dearth of research exploring how human dignity is affected during experiences of violence and displacement. Indeed, there is a dearth of literature which unearths an holistic understanding of 'what dignity means' or 'how dignity is degraded' both among forcibly displaced populations or refugees and amongst those who are subjected to violence, conflicts, abuse or social injustice (Misztal, 2012). While some displaced groups such as refugees are more frequently researched, others are under-researched, their voices are less heard in the global academic literature (Omata, 2019). IDPs in Afghanistan and forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who are currently living in Bangladesh are arguably two of the most persecuted populations in the world today. Therefore, it is imperative to understand what the IDPs and Rohingyas perceive as dignity (and loss of it) and how it underpins their calls for supporting their future. Tracking the experiences of the IDPs and Rohingyas provides a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced and an awareness of the knowledge necessary to increase and sustain communities' resilience to violence, conflict and other emergencies. It also provides the knowledge necessary to explore practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives and to prevent further displacements and migrations.

### **1.3 Methodology**

This study involved a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative data. To illustrate, data collection for this research involved a variety of techniques including storytelling interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), semi structured interviews and surveys. This research followed the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association (BSA), British Society of Criminology (BSC), and University of South Wales (USW) Research Ethics Arrangements in ensuring safety, security and confidentiality both of the respondents and the researchers. Written permission was obtained from the relevant offices/ministries in Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Particular care was taken to avoid reducing the wellbeing of the respondents, particularly the vulnerable IDPs and refugees. Informed consent was obtained in all cases. For the Rohingyas and IDPs informed oral consent was obtained after a detailed explanation in local languages about the aims, objectives, scope and limitations of this study and the purpose of interviews. Respondents were also informed that they could refuse or stop their participation without any negative consequences. In Bangladesh, whilst the researchers spoke Bengali, local translators were present during data collection and assisted effective communication between interviewers and participants who spoke a dialect particular to that region.

#### **1.3.1 Data collection in Bangladesh**

Qualitative data for the Rohingyas in Bangladeshi camps included storytelling interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with Rohingyas, along with semi-structured interviews with high-officials of humanitarian organisations and the Government of Bangladesh and an FGD with local (host population) residents of Cox's Bazar. Quantitative data were collected through a survey among the Rohingyas and an online survey for the humanitarian actors. Figure-1.1, illustrates different location of the camps in Cox's Bazar where fieldwork was conducted for storytelling interviews and FGDs with the Rohingyas, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with several humanitarian actors. The FGD with the host population was conducted in a village just outside the camps.

Before agreeing to be involved in either surveys or interviews all participants were provided with a detailed information sheet enabling them to give informed consent (or refuse to be involved).

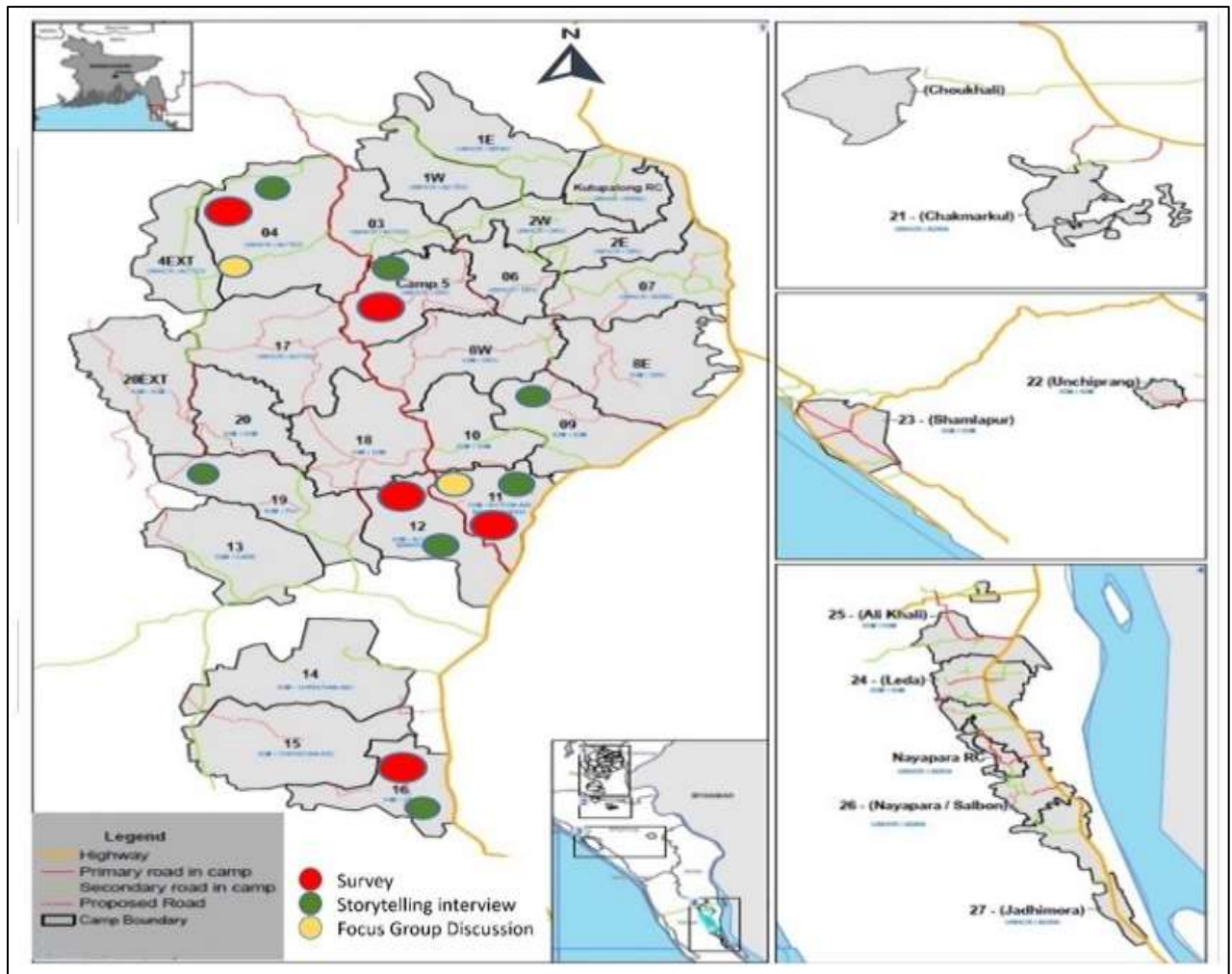


Figure 1.1: Map showing study location with different data sources

In terms of qualitative data collected in Bangladesh, storytelling interviews were conducted through purposive and snowball sampling in seven different camps in Ukhiya sub-district in Cox's bazar from June to December 2019. A total of 40 Rohingyas (30 male and 10 female) aged between 19-78 were interviewed by using a semi-structured interview schedule/questionnaire. Six focus group discussions were conducted, four separate FGDs in camp 11 (one with men, two with women and one with a family though the children did not participate), one with a group of young adult women in camp 16 and one FGD with men in camp 4. In total, 24 females and 21 males (45 in all) participated in these FGDs. There was also one FGD conducted in the host community, this involved 20 women and five men (25 in total).

Thirty six interviews were conducted with the high officials of humanitarian organisations and the Government of Bangladesh. High officials from the Government of Bangladesh included several senior bureaucrats, a minister and one senior advisor to the prime minister of Bangladesh. Among non-government organizations, high officials from several United Nation bodies, national and international NGOs were interviewed. One judge was also interviewed. Among frontline workers, healthcare professionals (i.e. doctors, nurses and medical

assistants, child and women protection workers), community workers and professionals involved in providing basic necessities in the camps were interviewed.

In terms of quantitative data in Bangladesh, a survey was conducted involving 419 Rohingya participants (173 males and 246 females) from five different camps in Cox's Bazar. One adult member from each selected household was recruited for this survey. Almost equal numbers of participants from each of the camps were selected:

Camp	Number of participants
4	83
5	83
11	85
12	80
16	88

Field workers from a local NGO provided support by introducing data collectors to the Rohingya respondents. Five local data collectors with a good grasp of the Rohingya language were trained by the research team to assist in this survey. Moreover, 91 staff members of various non-governmental humanitarian organisations participated in an online survey. Invitations for this bespoke JISC Online survey were sent to relevant humanitarian organisations by email and mobile text messages.

The qualitative audio recorded interviews were transcribed and translated into Bengali by professionals. They were then also translated into English, again by the professional translators and supervised by the research team. At the translation stage, local Rohingya and Bengali experts were hired to ensure that both the verbal and non-verbal contexts of the discussions, including vocalisation of the language and discourse were translated accurately to ensure that no meaning was lost. All details from the English transcripts were used for data entry. Qualitative data were analysed in NVivo-12 based on the emerging themes developed during and after the fieldwork as well as during the reading and re-reading of the transcripts. In terms of quantitative data, the Rohingya survey data was analysed via SPSS. For the online survey with humanitarian actors, the JISC system was used to generate frequency tables. Additional analyses was achieved using Microsoft Excel software.

### **1.3.2 Data collection in Afghanistan**

Due to the security situation in Afghanistan the researchers were not permitted to collect data in person. So, in Afghanistan with the aid of local research facilitators all data was collected from a distance either via telephone or by means of virtual meetings arranged using tablets. To ensure a full range of experiences and stories, respondent were purposively sampled drawing on the insights and experiences of displaced people, humanitarian field staff, and senior professionals (humanitarian or political) in the provinces, regions, and cities

of Afghanistan. Data collection in Afghanistan adopted a mixed methods approach comprising:

- two surveys (one with the IDPs and the other with staff members working at the frontline of humanitarian organizations) primarily designed to facilitate quantitative analysis of the issues related to displacement, experiences of violence and dignity.
- semi-structured interviews with IDPs as well as with front-line workers and with professionals, policy-makers, NGOs and other civil society which explore the reasons for displacement/migration, the journeys of the IDPs and the strategies of change/adaptation both group and individual.
- narrative/storytelling unstructured interviews which provide a deeper layer of understanding from the migrants/IDPs perspective.

Semi-structured interviews with 261 IDPs (156 male and 105 female) were conducted to facilitate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of violence, dignity, coping strategies, recovery, basic services, such as food security, access to shelter, and the use of durable solutions and emergency services in general, in response to the challenge of displacement. The depth of understanding was built upon through twenty storytelling interviews with IDPs (10 male and 10 female). The forty interviews with humanitarian field-staff and thirteen with more senior staff were also purposive, they were deliberately chosen for the insight they could give to the situation and any possible solutions from a policy or strategic perspective. Before agreeing to be involved in either surveys or interviews all participants were provided with a detailed information sheet enabling them to give informed consent (or refuse to be involved). All interviews were carefully transcribed in the original language, those in Dari and Pashtu were also translated. At the translation stage, local Afghan experts were hired to ensure that both the verbal and non-verbal contexts of discussions including vocalisation of the language and discourse were translated accurately to ensure that meaning was not lost. Qualitative interviews were analysed using thematic analysis via NVivo.

The IDP survey was conducted in one of the local languages, Pashtu or Dari (dependent on the preference of the IDP) and was completed by 527 IDPs (239 male and 288 female). The frontline staff survey was conducted in English and data was collected from 96 workers (82 male and 14 female). Each survey included both closed and open questions concerning issues about why IDPs were displaced, what sort of aid they could access, their assessment of the aid available to them and how it was distributed, their ideas of dignity and whether their dignity was respected and their hopes for improvement and for a sustainable future. The surveys were analysed using Tableau software.

In terms of both qualitative and quantitative data, the areas from which IDP participants and field staff members (working at the frontline of humanitarian organizations) were purposefully chosen, ensuring a cross-section of types of settlement (camps, settlements, or mixed with host-communities in both urban or semi-urban areas), types of environments

(urban and semi-urban) and different parts of Afghanistan. Data was collected from 8 provinces such as Kabul; Nangarhar; Pakya; Mazar; Kunduz; Herat; Kandahar and Badakhshan. This ensured that data from across Afghanistan was captured.

**Chapter 2 – A brief history of the Rohingya and the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Afghanistan, conceptualisation of dignity and the nexus between the dignity of Rohingya refugees, and sustainable development goals**

## 2.1 Study Background: two crises deeply rooted in history

This study focuses on two of the most persecuted and vulnerable groups of people today: the forcibly displaced Rohingyas of Myanmar who are currently living in Bangladeshi camps; and the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan. Both groups come from Muslim religious backgrounds and the crises they have experienced have been ongoing for a considerable time. To provide back groups to the study this section offers a brief account of the crises each group has suffered.

According to Yegar (1972), and Crouch (2016), the history of Rohingyas living in Arakan of Myanmar (previously known as Burma) can be dated back to the ninth century, and there are records from at least the thirteenth century onwards demonstrating their presence in the region. According to Ullah (2011), dating back to 1784, the Rohingyas were conquered originally from the mainly Muslim Kingdom of Arakan and were incorporated into the majority Buddhist kingdom of Burma. In 1824 the British colonised Arakan and later in the 1800s they colonised the rest of Burman which they administered as a province of India. The British moved population between Burma and East Bengal to meet their labour needs. During World War II the British were expelled from the Burma and Arakan by the Japanese. In 1942, when Japan invaded Burma the Rohingyas remained loyal to the British (as did many other non-Burmese ethnic groups). The Rohingyas paid a heavy price since Japan, as the winner, carried out multiple massacres to punish the Rohingyas for their pro-British Stance (Ibrahim, 2018: 27). Burma became independent in 1948, and some Arakanese Muslims filed an unsuccessful petition to annex Buthidaung and Maungdaw districts (in the north of Arakan) with East Pakistan. This led the Burmese authorities to regard the Muslims of Arakan as hostile to the new regime and to label them as outsiders whose loyalty belongs to another country (Ibrahim, 2018: 27-28). From this point onwards, Pittaway (2008: 86-87) insists that, the Burmese government continued to treat the Rohingyas who remained in Burma and those who returned from East Pakistan as illegal Pakistani immigrants.

Rohingyas have suffered from waves of persecution and forced migration under successive regimes in Myanmar and become pawns in the game of colonial and post-colonial politics and are stateless because of a history over which they had little control (Pittaway, 2008: 86). The Rohingyas have historically been excluded from the mainstream and suffered from extreme



persecution while their properties and land were continually confiscated. They have been persistently denied citizenship, and experienced gradual marginalisation along with prohibition from military service and participation in the civil service (Haacke, 2016; Holliday, 2014; Alam, 2019). Several waves of violence against the Rohingyas have broken out over the decades, in 1942, 1978, 1991–2, 1996, 2012, 2016 and, most recently, in August 2017 when the persecution took on a new dimension. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) found evidence that the attacks on Rohingyas were executed in a well-organised, coordinated, and systematic manner:

‘... prior to the incidents and crackdown of 25 August, a strategy was pursued to: 1) Arrest and arbitrarily detain male Rohingyas between the ages of 15-40 years; 2) Arrest and arbitrarily detain Rohingya opinion-makers, leaders and cultural and religious personalities; 3) Initiate acts to deprive Rohingya villagers of access to food, livelihoods and other means of conducting daily activities and life; 4) Commit repeated acts of humiliation and violence prior to, during and after 25 August, to drive out Rohingya villagers *en masse* through incitement to hatred, violence and killings, including by declaring the Rohingyas as Bengalis and illegal settlers in Myanmar; 5) Instil deep and widespread fear and trauma – physical, emotional and psychological, in the Rohingya victims via acts of brutality, namely killings, disappearances, torture, and rape and other forms of sexual violence’ (OHCHR, 2017: 1).

Similar observations were made by the UN Human Rights Council’s Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) suggesting the attacks were ‘widespread or systematic’ (UNHRC, 2018: 3), as specified in the definition of crimes against humanity and conducted “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (UNHRC, 2018: 16). The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in his opening statement to the 36th session of the Human Rights Council stated that the situation seems to be a ‘textbook example of ethnic cleansing’<sup>1</sup>.

Afghanistan has been mired in 42 years of protracted conflicts and frequent climate emergencies, including droughts and flooding. The ongoing conflicts can be traced back to the beginning of the civil war that started in 1978 between the anti-communist guerrillas and the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22044&LangID=E>. (last accessed on 25 August 2020)

Afghan communist government, aided by Soviet troops. This led to the overthrow of the government in 1992 (*Afghan War 1978–1992*, n.d.). The rise of the insurgent groups, such as the Mujahideen, Taliban and, more recently ISIS have limited humanitarian access throughout Afghanistan, but particularly in the most affected areas in the Eastern and Southern regions (Tronc, 2018). During the last 42 years, displacement has become a complex, acute, fluid, and protracted phenomena driven by a variety of complex factors including violence, drought, and natural disasters (such as floods, earthquakes, and avalanches). The history of forced displacement in Afghanistan can be presented into five phases based on ruling authority, faction, war, and external interventions in Afghanistan. The years 1978 to 1989 were marked by a pro-Soviet Marxist coup followed by Soviet invasion (phase 1), with subsequent civil war emerging following the withdrawal of Soviet forces (phase 2). From 1996 to 2000, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, inhabiting and controlling the country using violence and force (phase 3), which led to a prolonged period of US-led interventions (phase 4). Finally, 2014 onwards marks a period of gradual transition of security from US-led NATO forces to the Afghan government (phase 5). Since our research, a sixth phase has arisen, from July 2021 to date the Taliban have again ruled Afghanistan. It is too early to characterise this period though it is already clear that Afghan people are suffering from the withdrawal of humanitarian aid which followed the Taliban takeover. The conflicts and other factors (such as series of acute droughts and natural disasters resulting in the loss of lives, livelihood, poor food security and loss of livestock) have contributed to severe, hostile and deteriorating humanitarian situations, widespread internal displacement and to the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Afghans. As of December 2018, 2.7 million Afghan refugees have been registered by UNHCR, and approximately 1.8 million internally displaced persons have been registered (UNHCR, 2019), at the moment there are probably close to 3.5 million IDPs in Afghanistan (see the introduction).

Most displaced people live in major neighbouring regions and large cities, such as Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Kunduz and Mazar-e-Sharif, which have a higher than average employment and business prospects than other areas. In Afghanistan, the majority of displaced people live in informal settlements and non-official camps near or among the local communities. The most recent Human Development Report (UNDP, 2019) ranks Afghanistan among the lowest countries in terms of human development and gender equality (in 2018 it

had a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.496). The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), was fraught with internal political divisions, conflict and corruption, and, up until its deposition in July 2021 it had not established functioning state institutions and had been largely unable to provide functioning services during the last 18 years (Zyck, 2012). Aid organisations (largely international) have been actively and independently leading aid distribution throughout the country and have acted as independent and parallel structures to the government. Aside from emergency aid provided by the international community, social welfare in Afghanistan is traditionally structured on family and tribal hierarchies, there is a local custom of support in the community. Therefore, while there is no public welfare system, people in the community usually rely on these traditional safety nets through community structure and social relations to provide them with support when it is necessary. Where families are displaced, they are uprooted from these traditional sources of community provision and many are left without support, a similar outcome can arise where too many people in a community need such support.

## **2.2 Conceptualising dignity in the context of displacement**

Dignity is a complex concept, its meaning will differ depending on whether it is viewed from a philosophical, legal, medical, bio-ethical, psychological, behavioural or cultural perspective (Mattson and Clark, 2011; Pritchard, 1972). However, as a fundamental aspect of a democratic society, dignity is frequently central to discussions concerning violations of individual rights, freedoms and social justice (Misztal, 2012). This rights and social justice approach is central to understanding how the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and IDPs in Afghanistan perceive dignity and its loss.

In very general terms, dignity is an assertion of shared humanity (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013) and deemed to be 'a strong predictor of life satisfaction' (Hojman and Miranda, 2018: 2). In modern societies, the notion is related to social inclusion, participating in community life (Sen, 1999) or shaping one's own life (Nussbaum, 2000: 73). The exact meaning of dignity can be affected by the culture and historical events of a society because dignity is a socially constructed term and context is a crucial component to any application and consideration of dignity to a specific case or group (Reaume, 2003). From this it is clear that dignity cannot be encapsulated in one ubiquitous framework because it is innately a political, philosophical,

theological, and subjective issue (McCrudden, 2013). In this report, we look into dignity broadly through social science literature and in the context of displacement. We do that because in many traditional models or theories, the lived experience of affected people is absent, ignored or presumed by the theorist. These conceptualisations seldom gather or report affected communities' views on dignity (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway, 2018) so are blind to its real nature (Kriegel, 2017). In these understandings of dignity a discipline, state or large organisation sets out its definition and then examines whether that is being respected in particular contexts. This is a top-down conceptualisation (Patrick and Simpson, 2019) which is often invoked in modern humanitarian aid programmes or state-led assessments of their record on respecting the dignity of a group. The common and traditional approach which ignores the importance, experience and perception of dignity (and loss of it) from the perspective of the 'victim' group is, in effect, an act of denial; it imposes the view and perspective of the powerful on the experience of the vulnerable, denying their voice.

Dignity is a term which needs to be studied and understood. In particular, how it is used: to decide where control lies; by the powerful to assert their interests; and by the vulnerable to ask that their humanity be respected. It is used in social justice, for example, in discussions about violence, poverty, homelessness, war, the displacement of peoples and distribution of humanitarian aid (Bostrom, 2009; Anidjar, 2018). Such diverse application of dignity arises partly because it plays a key role in international human rights movements, and it features prominently in many documents that ground political principles for many nations. As a source of political goods (Bennett, 2016), dignity potentially serves as common ground to identify and secure shared interests such as justice and human entitlement in local through to global spaces (Mattson and Clark, 2011; Nussbaum, 2009). Dignity is also a moral mandate and places an absolute obligation on conscience and is thereby capable of enhancing political actions (Bennett, 2016: 142). It posits humans as part of the human family (ibid) and is claimed to be 'inalienable' (Kolani, 1976). This claim for 'dignity' first appears in the work of Immanuel Kant (1785), one of the earliest and still one of the leading thinkers to consider dignity.

For Kant (1785), all humans command dignity due to autonomy and their moral/ethical capacity. His thesis was that no individual should be treated as a means to an end because to do so would be to undermine their dignity. Each person is an end in themselves meaning that

each individual's autonomy or choice should be equally respected. This means that everyone is worthy of respect and, as a rational being, each person possesses an unconditional and incomparable worth: namely dignity. From a Kantian perspective, dignity refers to an absolute inner value that is characterised in terms of autonomy (Bayefsky, 2013; Misztal, 2012). Human beings are rational or have the capacity for rationality and decision-making which forms the basis of dignity (Kant, 1785). For Kant, dignity is intrinsic, extended to all humans even those who are vicious or bad or whose mental capacity is not yet formed or is reduced or destroyed. The crucial point is that Kant's idea of dignity is both inalienable (Leung and Cohen, 2011; Reaume, 2003) and normatively inviolable (meaning secure from attack, assault or trespass).

Building on Kant's ideas, some theorists have split dignity into two aspects: inner or human dignity and social dignity (Kateb, 2011). This categorisation probably encapsulates the most important aspects for modern debates. Inner/human dignity relates to oneself, one's values and how one sees oneself, it is largely inward looking. Social dignity relates to relations with others and how others perceive and treat an individual but also how an individual views others. Clearly inner dignity can be affected by social dignity (the way one is treated) and *vice versa*. In this regard each person is necessarily valuable but is also valued by others (Kateb, 2011). The expectation is that everyone should respect each individual and ensure that each person enjoys agency and independence; mutual respect and dignity. This contains aspects of what is accepted as necessary to dignity, namely, respect for the individual and allowing each person to choose and empower her/himself to ensure that their choice shapes their lives such that they can be self-reliant (Mosel and Holloway, 2019). The discussion on dignity in this sense can then be extended to social status, self-worth and honour, in a broad sense, including moral autonomy (Bayefsky, 2013).

Most theorists recognise that dignity, respect and honour are linked (Herrman, 2019: 11, Getz, 2018) though some view dignity and honour as different (Leung and Cohen, 2011). The difference may arise by accepting that in most societies some people are honoured more highly (treated with more dignity and respect) than others, they enjoy greater social standing (Schroeder and Bani-Sadr, 2017; Waldron, 2012: 201). This is clearly true and might lead one to question whether dignity is inalienable until one accepts that basic levels of respect and dignity are clearly essential both to a person's self-worth and to their ability to live a good life,

it is one of the foundations of their well-being. However, just as some enjoy more than basic rights, so some enjoy higher levels of respect and dignity.

The above illustrates that understanding of dignity has evolved but offers little of practical understanding. More recently, the concept of dignity, both in theory and in practice, has become intimately connected with the idea of human rights (Waldron, 2009; Bayefsky, 2013). The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries European constitutions and political declarations did not feature human dignity (Bostrom, 2009). It is only in the aftermath of the Second World War that human dignity finds its way into the centre of political standards and can be found in numerous national and international declarations and in the constitutions of nation states. Indeed, almost all international instruments dealing with rights or humanitarian issues contain reference to dignity (Sensen, 2011; Schroeder and Bani-Sadr, 2017; Waldron, 2012; Bayefsky, 2013; Grant, 2007; Bennett, 2016 and Holloway and Fan, 2018). For example:

‘We the peoples of the United Nations determine...to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person...’  
(Preamble of the United Nations Charter 1945).

‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ (Article 1 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948).

It even underlies those which embrace group rights:

‘...freedom, equality, justice and dignity are essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples...’  
(Preamble to the Charter of the Organization of African Unity, 1963; reiterated in the preamble to the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People’s rights, 1981).

Dignity also appears in the constitutions of many states and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which states (in a section marked ‘People’ which follows the Preamble) that the agenda aims to ‘...ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality ...’, These international documents help to show that human dignity appears to be of prime importance for contemporary discussions of human rights. However, the extent to which this is real is questionable as in these documents ‘dignity’ is not defined nor is there any indication of how it should be interpreted or how it underpins human rights; dignity is left as a vague notion, to be interpreted differently by each reader (Holloway and Fan, 2018; Sensen, 2011: 75; Bostrom, 2009). Therefore, whilst the inclusion of dignity in

international and political instruments is interesting and suggests that it has a powerful social, political and human importance its underlying meaning is very unclear. The notion has been taken for granted as if the term comes with innate clarity.

As seen above, there is no 'innate clarity' about the concept of dignity. It is a very broad term which can resonate with almost any cause (Regilme, 2019: 287). So, it appeals to the Western, liberal ideas of rights as providing socio-legal protection against state power when it threatens to undermine individual rights and freedoms. It also appeals to the rights ideals of the global South and of peoples from developing countries where rights need to deliver entitlements and commodities to some of the poorest and most marginalised people as well as providing justice for peoples or groups as opposed to individuals (Fortman, 2011, Regilme, 2019). By recognising dignity as a human right, actors from both the global North and South are able to celebrate the differences of various identities and shift the conversation toward actual policies and governance structures to support and promote justice relevant to their different contexts (Regilme, 2019; Benhabib, 2011; Perez, 2018). This recognises that context alters the meaning of rights and dignity and that powerful states and the international community should be prevented from imposing their ideas of rights and dignity onto less powerful states, communities and groups. Therefore, individuals and communities should be central to the discussion as to what dignity means to them and how it should be delivered, or made 'real' (Fortman, 2011 and Regilme, 2019). It is only by embracing the broader language permitted through dignity and moving away from a Western liberal insistence on a narrow group of civil and political rights to embrace economic, social and group rights that justice can be brought back to people. This wider purview will include areas of real importance to people in different situations in all parts of the world, only then can states be prevented from over-extending their powers, only then the full concept of dignity is embraced so that people can live well (Sen, 2009).

Other than the contemporary secular understandings of dignity that have been discussed, it is important to point out that the notion also has solid bases in the world's major religions - Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and Hinduism (Iglesias, 2001; Simion, 2016; Schroeder, 2012; Schroeder and Bani-Sadr, 2017; Lee, 2008). For Example, a human being is an avatar of a deity in Hinduism; is created in God's image in Judaism; and is a moral agent in

Confucianism (Lee, 2008), and even coexists with the divine through hypostatic union in Jesus Christ (Simion, 2016: 70; Lee, 2008). For its more particular relevance to this study, we briefly expand on dignity in Islam. Although 'dignity' may not have an exact equivalent in the Arabic language in which the primary sources of Islam - the Qura'an and Sunnah – are revealed, the concept of *karāma* (كرامة) is the closest to convey this meaning. *Karāma* in Arabic means dignity, honour, respect/prestige and high status (<http://www.ectaco.co.uk/English-Arabic-Dictionary/>). And with regard to inherent human dignity, the Quran says:

‘ولقد كرّمنا بني آدم ..’ (Quran 17/70) that translates as: And we have indeed bestowed the children of Adam with dignity/honour...’ (Quran 17/70).

While dignity/honour and its various dimensions in this context are interpreted by Islamic scholars in different ways, what is important is its generality to 'the children of Adam' – all human beings irrespective of their race, gender/sex, socio-economic class, or any other individual and social attributes. While Islam emphasizes the inherent fundamental dignity of all human beings, its core is enhanced by the righteousness of a human individual as the Quran says:

‘O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he/she who is) the most righteous of you’ (Quran 49:13).

The criterion for 'righteousness' is complex and highly context-bound in Islam, according to Schroeder and Bani-Sadr (2017) the elevation of an individual's human dignity is directly related to the ways he/she treats other humans. Thus, violation of other people's dignity leads to the lowering of one's own dignity. Schroeder and Bani-Sadr (2017) also stress that dignified treatment of each other is closely inter-connected with freedom (from oppression and humiliation), peace and human development. And, because humans become and remain noble/dignified through virtuous acts (Quran 49:13 cited in Schroeder and Bani-Sadr 2017), virtue is realised in the expansion of freedom through development (Quran 72:14 cited in Schroeder and Bani-Sadr 2017). This understanding of dignity in Islam has similarities with Kant's philosophical ideas emphasising one's obligations to uphold his/her own dignity and the obligation to others for respecting theirs. It is also similar to Sen's ideas about the strong connections between individual dignity and human development. As will be discussed later in



this report, it is the Islamic meaning of dignity that is central to the perceptions of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and IDPs in Afghanistan.

In explaining dignity among the Rohingyas, Uddin (2017), based on many case studies with the displaced Rohingyas in Bangladeshi camps insists that Rohingyas generally referred to *ijjot* in the context of experience of rape and sexual assault, which was associated with their perception of dignity. For them, being raped or sexually assaulted (which means 'losing *ijjot*') are extreme violations that completely breaks down their idea of dignity. This was also evident in Holloway and Fan's (2018) research on dignity among the displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh. They suggest that Rohingya meaning of dignity mainly focus on the notions of *maan-shomman* [honour and status] and *ijjot* [respecting other]. They further insist that dignity among the Rohingya has three dimensions: the social, religious, and economic. Collective dignity and mutual respect, freedom to worship and practicing faith, and unable to meet family's basic or daily need are seen to be associated with their notion of dignity. In the current context while the Rohingyas are living in congested Bangladeshi camps, dignity can also include their citizenship, recognition of identity and safe and voluntary repatriation (Bradley, 2009), as well as fear of various types of violence including abuse, torture, and rape (Ahmed, 2019). Current living condition in various camps is seen as less dignified compared to their perception of dignity since Rohingya notion of privacy (*purdah*) or cultural values (e.g. men and women are in the same que for using latrines) are not well maintained in the camps (Oxfam, 2018). Privacy is a very important aspect of the Rohingya understanding of 'dignity' and particularly linked with physical mobility of women and children. Feeling ashamed is another important element of dignity particularly for the Rohingya women who have experienced sexual violence and who often fear to talk about their past. Shame can be seen associated with their idea of dignity as they consider being a victim of rape or sexual violence as shameful, they do not want their husband or anyone else to know about it. It is also necessary to note that women and children feel ashamed if men see them wash their menstrual clothing in camps (Farzana, 2017).

As a Muslim society the concept of dignity for Afghans is strongly influenced by Islamic teachings. As explained above, in Islam, dignity is inherent to all humans and is referred to in the Quran as *karāma* (dignity, honour, respect and high status in Arabic) with which all human

beings are endowed. Indeed, the Quranic word– *karāma* – is used for dignity in Pashto and Dari in Afghanistan. However, this conceptualisation of dignity is further mixed with Afghan patriarchal cultural values over the centuries. Preserving the dignity and honour of the other side in any kind of relationship is fundamental in Afghanistan (Kandiwall, 2019). Thus, the concept of *karāma* is used interchangeably with *ghairat* (zeal) *nang -wa-namos* (protection of family – especially women - and its property), *izzat -wa- abro* (respect, prestige, status). Translating these general concepts of dignity involve many dimensions including compassion and respect; protection from sexual abuse and harassment; meeting basic needs; religious and cultural values; and peace and security. For the Afghan IDPs, their *Izat -wa- Abro* is closely linked to “peace” and return to their homes. Peace and having a home (with hujra, men house) are particularly relevant here. If a person does not have a shelter or settlement in Afghanistan, he faces many problems. An Afghan who is living in an IDP camp in UNHCR tent cannot be hospitable person because he cannot take a guest inside the tent where his wife and other younger females are carrying out their duties. Consequently, he loses his face and dignity. Women in this situation face similar invasions of privacy as do their counterparts in the refugee camps in Bangladesh.

### **2.3 The nexus between the dignity of internally displaced people and sustainable development goals**

The ongoing plights of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and IDPs in Afghanistan pose a significant challenge to the delivery of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, sustainable governance and sustainable human development are at the core of this study since it focuses on the displaced people (Rohingyas and IDPs) who are victims of violence and conflict. Few people in the world live in more abject poverty or are treated with less dignity than these people. Our study suggests ways forward to establish dignity, social justice, and cultural wellbeing for these vulnerable groups.

Our study unearths information which helps us to understand the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and IDPs in Afghanistan: the impetus for their movement, and its effects on their lives. Sustainable development requires just institutions, alleviation of poverty, provision of education etc., all of which are essential for dignity, the central focus of this study. Violence is another key theme as turmoil and military conflicts are at the centre of the reason for the

suffering and internal displacement of people in Afghanistan and state violence led to the exodus of the Rohingya from Myanmar. Such violence strips people of everything they have and much of what they identify with and leaves them with few possessions, often nothing. Frequently it separates them from family, community and culture, making them dependent on others to survive so it strips them of their independence and often also their dignity. Endemic violence leads to the fragility of societies and of its institutions and undermines the basics requirements for sustainable development.

Our study draws out both the similarities and differences around the causes, cultures, experiences and effects of displacement/migration and explores how problems in these areas might be tackled by suggesting practical pathways to redemption and prevention and enhancing dignity and social justice for these people. In that context, this study is predominantly linked with Goal-16 of the SDGs that ‘aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’. Below, we specify how this study covers specific targets of the Goal-16 of the SDGs, such as:

- Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (Target – 16.1)
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children (Target – 16.2)
- Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all (Target - 16.3)
- Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels (Target – 16.7)
- Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements (Target – 16.10)

In addition to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the findings of the study are also interconnected with other goals and targets of the SDGs. Such as:

- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Goal-3).
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal – 5). More specifically: eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation) (Target 5.2)

- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal – 6). More specifically: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (Target 6.1)
- By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums (Target 11.1)

No culture can thrive without security and justice so having a fair, effective and efficient justice system capable of challenging violent and other criminal activities is essential. While failure to tackle violence was one factor which prevented some countries from achieving their millennium development targets by 2015 (World Bank, 2011; OECD, 2015), there was also often an institutional failure. Endemic violence and violent discrimination undermine stable institutions and access to justice, rights, jobs, education and other aspects of normal life which in turn allows violence to take hold. These problems often create a vicious circle which needs to be broken before sustainable development can flourish. Institutional stability to provide justice and protect citizens are key to ensuring the security of citizens.

Tracking the experiences of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and IDPs in Afghanistan: delivers a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced; creates the knowledge necessary to improve the just and dignified delivery of support necessary to sustain displaced persons and their communities; uncovers practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives (both short-term and more durable); and highlights the multidimensional support necessary to help the Rohingyas and IDPs to return to their places of origin, resettle elsewhere, or integrate into their host communities. The study, therefore, provides knowledge which can make positive changes to people's lives allowing them to lead safe and peaceful lives where they are treated with dignity, justice and equality and allowed and supported to move out of poverty and re-build (or build new) healthy lives and communities.

**Chapter 3: Causes of internal displacement and the journeys of displaced people in Afghanistan and the forced displacement of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.**

### 3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter briefly illustrates the periods of war, conflict and violence experienced by both the Rohingyas and IDP's for over forty years prior to being displaced in Afghanistan and forcibly displaced from Myanmar to Bangladesh (greater detail can be found in the separate reports for each country). It provides a brief overview of the causes of internal displacement and the displacement journeys of the Internally Displaced People (IDP)s in Afghanistan due to war, conflict and or environmental factors. It also briefly illustrates the oppressive and discriminatory treatment of the Rohingyas prior to the forced migration and their sufferings and experiences during the forced mass displacement.

### 3.2. Causes of displacement

As noted in the introduction (chapter 1) and the literature review (chapter 2) within Afghanistan, the causes of displacement included war, conflict, and violence; drought, famine, and natural disasters such as floods, landslides, and avalanches; a lack of income-generating opportunities; destruction of property and land; difficulty meeting basic needs and accessing basic facilities; and loss of dignity. Of the 527 IDPs that participated in a survey convened for this research to explain their displacement experiences, the majority (almost 80%) indicated that the main cause of their displacement was war and conflict, followed by violence, drought, natural disasters, and a lack of income-generating opportunities (Kamruzzaman et al 2021). Qualitative interviews with a further 281 IDPs (interviewees and storytellers) identified additional factors leading to displacement, including famine, destruction of property and land, difficulty meeting basic needs, difficulty accessing healthcare and educational facilities, and loss of dignity. In addition, it was clear that the main cause of displacement varied by province. The qualitative data also revealed that despite there being a combination of factors which accounted for displacement, most often the final reason was extreme violence though in some cases natural disaster displaced Afghans:

*'I am 30 years old. I cannot explain the problems which we suffered from, the Taliban came and destroyed our houses, trees, and beautiful village. They killed our children, youths, the elderly, and women. We have not found the dead bodies of some' (A143, a male IDP, Jalalabad)*

*'ISIS killed our people with bombs, 7 members of my family including my brother and nephews and 13 of my other relatives. In one day, ISIS killed 120 of us' (A136, a male IDP, Jalalabad)*

*'I was a simple farmer in my village. My cultivation was dependent on seasonal rainfall. When we did not have enough rainfall in our areas, we were borrowing money to supply our primary needs. I decided to migrate and try to change my life' (A06, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

Other causes of displacement included a lack of income-generating opportunities, destruction of property and land, difficulty meeting basic needs and difficulty accessing healthcare or educational facilities. These problems led many IDPs to migrate in order to seek employment and livelihood opportunities, economic migration.

*'There was no job for our husbands, and we did not have the security and money to survive. Finally, we concluded that we had to leave and find a better place to live' (A152, a female IDP, Kabul)*

*'I came here to find a job. The low economic status made me move here' (A10, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

Some IDPs even cited loss of dignity as a cause of their displacement though the attack on dignity might arise from one of the issues mentioned above:

*'Dignity and honour means a lot to anyone, we came here because our dignity was not safe there' (A188, a female IDP, Kandahar)*

*'We left our place because of war, our dignity was not safe there' (186, a female IDP, Kandahar)*

The above quotes evidence the multiple factors: extreme violence; war; impact of the natural disasters; lack of opportunities for employment; and, a loss of dignity that contributed to the displacement of IDPs in Afghanistan.

As noted in the introduction (chapter 1) and the literature review (chapter 2), despite living with oppression and discrimination for over sixty years, the main cause of the forced displacement of the Rohingyas from Myanmar in 2017, was a clearance operation. The violence was orchestrated and systematic and included: human rights violations; the capture and execution of men; violence towards and killing of men, women and children; gender-based violence, atrocities committed against women and children, including rape, sexual and physical abuse; dismembering of bodies (dead and alive), especially of women and children; and the executions of vulnerable older people. These atrocities were led by the Myanmar military but also involved the local Buddhists ('Mogh').

Of the 419 forcibly displaced refugees that participated in a survey conducted for this research, the majority (100% of men and 98% of women) claimed that they had been directly victimised by and/or witnessed extreme violence in Myanmar during the 2017 clearance operation (Williams *et. al.*, 2021). The quantitative data was endorsed by the story telling interviews with a further 40 Rohingyas living in Bangladeshi camps and with the focus groups (including another 45 Rohingyas) which reveal the full extent of the atrocities and extreme violence witnessed during the 2017 clearance operation in Myanmar.

*'Is there anything left of our dignity? They raped our mothers and sisters in front of other people. Snatching the baby from mothers before they raped the mothers, [thus]*

*they committed serious hostility. Little kids were thrown into the fire.’ (B24, a 50 year old male)*

The severity of the attacks left the Rohingyas no choice, if they wanted to remain alive, they had to flee Myanmar. The Rohingya refugees were chased by the Myanmar military and the Buddhist locals all the way to the border with Bangladesh.

While Afghan IDPs migrated due to the war, conflict, and violence in Afghanistan, they also felt they had to leave their homes to save themselves. However, their displacement was less organised, some were displaced to rural areas and others to urban areas, and some to camps. For the Afghan IDPs whose main reasons for migrating were drought, natural disasters, and a lack of income-generating opportunities displacement was to urban areas. All the Rohingyas were systematically driven to becoming refugees in Bangladesh. Despite the reasons for displacement and forced displacement being significantly different, both sets of participants lost their homes, many lost family members and they lost access to their livelihoods and, very importantly, their dignity was severely affected.

### **3.3 Displacement Journeys**

During the displacement journeys, both Rohingya refugees and most of the IDPs suffered from extreme violence. Both sets of participants conveyed that the majority experienced severe violence and traumatic events, that many, particularly children, could not forget. Both the IDPs and Rohingyas described such events as ‘terrifying’, ‘devastating’, and ‘traumatic’, with many losing family members in the process of trying to escape. In conjunction with the Rohingyas, many conflict induced IDPs suffered long journeys, often on foot, to reach their destinations, and were forced to leave their livelihoods, relatives (in the case of IDPs, almost all the Rohingya who were not killed travelled together), and belongings behind. Most IDPs faced a multitude of difficulties along the way, including exhaustion, hunger, thirst, motor vehicle accidents, and abuse and interference from armed groups. Some IDPs also reported experiencing harrowing events on their journeys such as direct violence and the death of their children and spouses.

*‘There was a horrifying situation on the way, we experienced fear, terror, insecurity, starvation, and witnessed unlawful deeds by the Taliban as they beat our children, men, and women. My daughter was beaten severely, and she already has breathing problems’ (A21, a female IDP, Herat)*

As with many IDPs, mass torture and destruction forced the Rohingyas to leave villages to avoid the violence and stay alive. Those who managed to escape their villages were fleeing for their lives. Even then the Myanmar forces did not leave them in peace, they continued to violently target them, to ensure that they left Myanmar. Gunshots aimed at running unarmed Rohingyas killed many (number not known) while many others managed to escape. Many of



those alive are currently carrying wounds from gunshots sustained in these violent attacks or when they were fleeing for their lives.

*'After climbing down the hills, we took refuge in a Char (Sandbar Island) because we had to cross a river in order to reach Bangladesh. The military was shooting at us from their helicopters while we were on our way to the Char. There were four of us together. But there were other people nearby, running. One of us was shot and died on the spot. I was also shot by a bullet and fell onto the ground. Some people carried me to the bank of the river.'* (B18, a 19 year old male)

In Afghanistan, the IDPs who were displaced due to drought and other natural disasters generally used safe and reliable transportation to reach their intended destinations. However, many were forced to sell their assets and belongings along the way to pay for their transportation and living costs, making them increasingly vulnerable. Similarly, to reach safety in Bangladesh the Rohingyas all had to pay to cross the river that runs between Myanmar and Bangladesh. To do that they had to pay the ferrymen and many had to use the valuables they had brought with them to secure a crossing.

*'The military chased us and forced us to go towards the border with Bangladesh, to the river. It was the only direction they would allow us to go. When we got to the river we had no money to pay for a crossing so we had to give all our jewellery and our ornaments to the boatmen so we could cross the river. They took everything and it was worth a lot of money. We arrived in Bangladesh empty handed but the host community in Bangladesh helped us, they provided clothes, food and shelter until the camps were set up.'* (Man 6, Male focus group 2)

### **3.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter built on the literature to illustrate how the periods of war, conflict and violence experienced by both the IDPs and displaced Rohingyas for more than forty years contributed to their respective displacement. It identified how the periods of war, conflict, violence, and or environmental factors has contributed to the oppression and deprivation of the IDPs and the institutionalised discrimination, which contributed to a loss of dignity. It has also portrayed the different causes of displacement for the IDPs and the forced migration of the Rohingyas, illustrating the trauma suffered during the journeys of both the conflict-induced and disaster-induced IDPs and the Rohingya refugees who were forced to flee to save their lives.

## **Chapter 4 - Conceptualisations of Dignity through the eyes of Rohingyas and the IDPs**

## **4.1 Chapter Overview**

This chapter firstly details the conceptualisation of dignity among internally displaced people in Afghanistan, and the Rohingya Refugees who were forcibly displaced from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Within the literature (See Chapter 2), traditional models or theories of dignity used a top-down conceptualisation which either fails to consider or only superficially considers the lived experiences of people whose dignity is under threat or being violated (Patrick and Simpson, 2019). This chapter adopts a bottom-up approach to examining dignity from the perspective of IDPs' and Rohingyas' feelings, and perceptions. It documents the preservation and destruction of dignity for IDPs and Rohingyas. These findings can be used to inform the development of future policies, ensuring that the perceptions of both IDPs and the displaced Rohingya refugees are adequately reflected and considered

## **4.2 Conceptualising Dignity through the lenses of IDP's and Rohingya Refugees**

As seen in Chapter 2, there are many ways in which dignity has been conceptualised. Despite being promoted as an integral element of human rights (see chapter 2) there is no clear definition of dignity. Indeed, as this study discovered, a precise, single, definition of dignity is not possible because 'dignity' is shaped by cultural, social, political, and religious contexts. Here, conceptualisations of dignity based upon the lived experiences and cultural perspectives of IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingya refugees are discussed. For the IDPs, the concept is further aligned with Afghan patriarchal cultural values over the centuries. In the context of the displaced Rohingya refugees, Holloway and Fan (2018) assert that Rohingya notion of dignity can be described in three broad aspects namely social; religious; and economic. However, this study questions whether this three-dimensional model is able to fully capture the complexity and nuances of the Rohingyas lives and their experiences of violence (which consisted of discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and being forcibly displaced). Analysis of the collated evidence suggests that the violent experiences of each group had significantly reduced individual and collective dignity and thereby shaped their conceptualisation of dignity. There are some common features through which the IDPs and Rohingyas perceived dignity which are:

- Safety, and protection from violence and sexual abuse
- Compassion, solidarity, and mutual respect
- Religious and cultural values
- Wealth, prosperity and self-reliance
- Knowledge and education (Ilm)

In addition to the commonalities evident in both the IDPs and Rohingya conceptualisation of dignity, this study also identified contextual differences in understanding how the IDPs and Rohingyas perceive and describe dignity. The areas of difference are interesting as the broad categories are important for both groups, the differences in conceptualisation arise in the detail. So, in the three areas that follow the issue was important for each group but its significance, the way in which it was important to dignity, was shaped by the context. This highlights the importance of perspective in unpicking the meaning of dignity. The areas to be considered here are:

- Peace and security
- Identity, freedom and rights
- Shelter, food and other basic needs

The following section elaborates each of these aspects of dignity as described by the IDPs and Rohingyas. The narratives confirm the multiple meanings of dignity.

### **4.3 Common features of dignity through the perceptions of IDPs and Rohingyas**

This section provides empirical evidence on the common features where we found significant similarities between the perceptions of the IDPs and Rohingyas, confirming that dignity is a multidimensional concept. Whilst there is general agreement in these areas, a reading of the separate reports (Kamruzzaman, *et.al.* 2021 and Williams, *et.al.* 2021) displays nuanced differences between IDPs and refugee Rohingyas even in these aspects of dignity.

#### **4.3.1 Safety, and Protection from violence and sexual abuse**

Many IDPs conceptualised dignity in terms of **protection of their lives, homes, and families**, and protection from violence and harassment. Each group had been subjected to extreme violence, which significantly reduced and or removed their dignity. Their lives, homes and families had been destroyed and their safety and protection from violence and sexual abuse was paramount. Therefore, it was important that their lives, homes (however temporary), and families were protected from violence, including sexual abuse.

*'I try to come home in the early evening as I'm worried about my family's safety. It is possible that some unknown people will enter my house and harm our family. We cannot do anything to deal with them. This would harm our dignity. I am doing my best to protect it.'* (A11, a male IDP, Badakhshan)

*'We were even frightened by the barking of foxes at night. My son [child] felt sick one day when he saw the Military. Even if they found us chatting together, they used to*

*shoot at us....how could we have any dignity in such circumstances?’ (B01, a 26 year old female).*

For some male IDPs, dignity includes **protecting the female and other members of their family**.

*‘Dignity means the protection of women by a male partner or family member.’ (A195, a male IDP, Kunduz)*

For other IDPs, dignity involved protection from the **sexual abuse and harassment**, which was viewed as a major threat to dignity for both women and men.

*‘Dignity for me simply means not being raped and to not even be at risk of it.’ (A04, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

Rohingya men and women also explained how rape and sexual violence (which was used to terrorise them in Myanmar) contributed to their loss of dignity, which the displaced Rohingya refugees generally referred as ‘losing ijgot’. Many participants, particularly though not exclusively females, stated that incidents and fear of rape along with mass killings in Myanmar were the two most violent and horrific experiences that were directly linked with their loss of dignity. 30% males and 23% females confirmed that that rape (sexual violence against women) had a significant impact upon their dignity (see Williams *et. al.* 2021).

*‘They’ve disgraced our mothers and sisters which ruined our dignity the most.’ (B23, a 50 year old male).*

*‘We have lost our dignity. We have suffered a great loss which cannot be expressed in words. Take for example, if an unknown male grabs the hand of an unknown woman, we consider that to be disrespectful and a huge blow to our dignity. Our dignity has suffered much worse than that owing to the current situation.’ (B02, a 30 year old female)*

#### **4.3.2 Compassion, solidarity and mutual respect**

For the IDPs and Rohingyas, dignity was strongly associated with **mutual respect, compassion and honour**. These were key values displayed by a dignified person, they were also important to them as a community and enhanced their overall dignity. Good manners, spending time with family were important to both groups and respect and compassion should be extended to **all members of a community**, including elders, children and strangers. Therefore, compassion and treating others with honour and respect were integral elements of the socio-cultural values that contributed to their overall dignity.

*'We respect others and behave well towards them. They do the same and this is how we succeed in protecting our dignity and honour' (A01, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

*'Dignity and respect come from the way we carry ourselves so that our juniors respect us. That's pride for us. If we have a visitor in our house, we enquire about their health and ask whether they've had their meals.'* (B04, a-35 year old male)

*'Good deeds such as helping those who are in trouble, offering rice to someone who is in need and making others happy uphold our dignity.'* (B26, a 44 year old male)

### **4.3.3 Religious and cultural values**

**Religion and cultural values** were often interwoven and were important. Islam is of central importance to both the IDPs and Rohingyas and is core to their understanding of dignity. It is part of who they are and both groups placed high importance in being able to follow, and practice their religion. Furthermore, religious standards overlapped with some key cultural values which were also central to dignity, for example, privacy (purdah, especially protecting women from external gaze) and protection of their families and women. For the Rohingya it became an even greater focus for their dignity when the authorities in Myanmar tried to prevent them practicing their religion (they closed Mosques, banned Islamic dress for women, forced them to remove protective screens from around their houses, closed Islamic schools (Madrasas), banned quoting from the Quran etc.).

*'We should observe the rights of our neighbours as a committed Muslims and observe the ultimate emphasis of Islam on our neighbours' rights and honour, and the dignity of others' (A03, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

*'To me, as a woman, dignity means to cover my head, wear a hijab, and not permit others to see my hair and body' (A34, a female IDP, Herat)*

*'The only reason we were tortured was because we were Muslims. If we had the same ethnicity, they wouldn't be able to torture us like this.'* (B21, a 40 year old male)

*'Dignity means to stick with namaz (Islamic prayer) and for female, not to go outside home unaccompanied by a male relative. when she goes out.'* (B29, a 40 year old male)

### **4.3.4 Wealth, prosperity and self-reliance**

Being able to provide for their families and levels of wealth were also commonly featured by the IDPs and Rohingyas in describing what dignity means for them. It was of significant importance, again through their lived experiences, as many of them had lost their wealth and prosperity, which included their land, homes, businesses and property. They were forced to

become dependent upon aid, that seriously reduced their dignity, individually and collectively especially as there were either no or only limited opportunities to access long-term work and education. This meant that the **wealth, prosperity and self-reliance** which they considered essential for their dignity were all absent. Dignity was linked to opportunities for employment and being able to feed and look after their family.

*'The minimum dignity a person needs to live with in this world had been denied to us. I had 7 cows and 12 goats. They burned down homes and took our lands and properties. How can our dignity stay intact?'* (B13, a 55 year old female)

*'There is nothing left of our dignity. I had a fishing boat, which they burnt down. I also owned a grocery shop which I stocked with a lot of hard work. We were forced to abandon all of our properties and assets. I don't know what happened to my shop.'* (B14, a 52 years old male)

The issue of self-reliance and self-sufficiency was core to both IDPs and the Rohingya, they both viewed this as absolutely essential to their long-term dignity and their well-being.

*'I see a dignified future if there is work for our males, schools and clinics for our children, and an end to our poverty.'* (A188, a female IDP, Kandahar)

*'Unless you return back to your home or you become self-sufficient you can't regain your dignity.'* (A200, a male IDP, Mazar)

*'When a person becomes self-sufficient, he can regain his dignity.'* (A209, a male IDP, Mazar)

*'My maternal grandfather was a dignified man. He had two brothers – one worked in police, and another one was a customs officer. All of them brought dignity for their family. My grandfather was serving in the Burma [Myanmar] government.'* (B37, a 66 year old male))

*'We need one thing: to allow our men to go outside for work.'* (B06, a 60-year-old female)

Although most IDPs and Rohingya refugees aligned the concept of dignity with self-sufficiency, some maintained that they were not affected by poverty, wealth or status.

Poverty does not mean loss of dignity, and we thank God that we have dignity. (A113, a male IDP, Herat)

All humans have honour and dignity, and poverty does not damage human dignity and disrespect. There is no harm to our dignity and honour. **A116, a male IDP, Herat**

#### 4.3.5 Knowledge and education

A large majority of both IDPs and Rohingya refugees spoke of dignity in terms of access to schools and education for their children. Knowledge and those with knowledge (Rohingyas call them 'Ilemdar') are respected and often occupy positions of leadership in the community. Education was often highlighted as a key priority as many IDPs and Rohingya felt strongly that their children could only go on to lead dignified lives if they received a good quality education. They also considered a lack of opportunity for them or their children to gain **education and knowledge** as a reduction of their dignity both as individuals and as a collective. The Rohingya's refer to this as *ilm* which, for them, is an all-embracing term that covered wisdom, insights, religious education and broader formal education at schools all of which is core to their dignity.

*'I wish and I hope for a better life for my children through having access to quality education and schools. They would have a dignified life.'* (A01, a male IDP, Badakhshan)

*'When my children can go to school and continue their education, we will feel blessed. I think they will have a life with honour and dignity.'* (A16, a male IDP, Badakhshan)

*'In our society, the Islamic scholars (Ilemdar) are deemed to be the most respected such as the Imams, and Muazzem.<sup>2</sup> Teachers, and Chairmen are also respected within our community. As a Rohingya, we were unable to access Higher Education, which meant the scope of moving up in society, to earn more respect, was very limited.'* (B19, a 50 year old male)

*'... if I had some *ilm* and connection with the [Myanmar] government, my society would respect me.'* (B30, a 40 year old male)

There were, however, gender inequalities in certain aspects of the gaining of knowledge. Whilst parents supported knowledge for both girls and boys they recognised that culturally that was not always accepted and that educational dignity for females was sometimes gained vicariously, through the education of their fathers, husbands, sons and brothers.

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<sup>2</sup> Muazzem is a religious scholar who makes the ritualistic call for congregational prayers.



#### 4.4 Contextually different elements of dignity as identified by the IDPs and displaced Rohingyas

In the areas discussed here there were clear contextual differences between the IDPs and Rohingya perceptions of dignity. These differences confirm how the notions of dignity may vary in different contexts. It is also clear from what follows that some of the contextual differences cause the interpretation of an aspect of dignity to be differently interpreted though the overarching concepts may appear similar.

##### 4.4.1 Peace and Security

Perhaps because of protracted and ongoing conflicts and wars that have contributed to the displacement of most IDPs in Afghanistan dignity for them was generally understood in terms of **peace, and security**, and the complete eradication of war, conflict, and violence. This was generally linked to the need for a stable government. With peace in their places of origin and a stable government they felt their dignity would be restored and they could return and continue their lives.

*'For me, dignity means peace and serenity. If you are calm and safe, your honour and dignity are preserved.'* (A05, a male IDP, Badakhshan)

*'If peace comes to our place and we return to it, then that will be a dignified life for us. Without peace there is no dignity.'* (A120, a female IDP, Jalalabad)

*'We should have a stable government providing us security. Peace is the main necessity for a dignified life.'* (A04, a male IDP, Badakhshan)

Peace was not being prioritised by the displaced Rohingyas as a key concept of dignity but security was. However, for them, security meant being and feeling safe, and not being harmed by the security forces or by other rival ethnic groups if and when the Rohingyas returned to Myanmar and being permitted to peacefully enjoy their cultural and religious practices.

*'For dignity, we must be given security to our lives in our birth place. We did not harm anyone...why do they want to continue killing us?'* (B05, a 55 year old male).

*'That's why I plead to your government for not to send us back without ensuring security. We are ready to die here, for we'll at least get a Kafon [cloth used to wrap the body in Muslim funeral] to cover our dead bodies after death.'* (B06, a 60 year old female)

#### 4.4.2 Identity, freedom and rights

Whilst **identity, freedom and rights** were important to both IDPs in Afghanistan and to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh the meanings and content given to these concepts by each group was rather different.

IDPs discussed dignity in terms of their **freedom and their fundamental human rights**. They argued that IDPs should enjoy the same rights as the local residents in their host communities. They also emphasised the importance of women's and children's freedom and rights, even to the extent of saying they would leave Afghanistan altogether to ensure equal rights for men and women.

*'Dignity for me means satisfying your own rights and recognising the rights of others.'* (A206, a male IDP, Mazar)

*'Female's dignity means to give them all their legal rights and to not let anyone suppress their rights.'* (A178, a male IDP, Kandahar)

By contrast, the Rohingyas argued for recognition as citizens of Myanmar. Their persecution and deracination arose from the persistent denial by the Myanmar government of Rohingyas as citizens of Myanmar. Identity (as both Rohingya and a citizen of Myanmar) was thus integral to Rohingya perceptions of dignity and most of the Rohingyas believed that the removal of their citizenship status was a key factor that prevented them from living a dignified life. Not recognising the citizenship rights of the Rohingyas dehumanised and alienated them from society, and thus significantly reduced their dignity.

*'...we call ourselves Rohingya. It means the people of Burma. This was our dignity, our pride.'* (B04, a 35-year-old male)

*'We must have Rohingya [identification] cards, not the card that currently label us as 'Kolai' [people of darker skin] or 'Bengali' [illegal immigrants]. Rohingya cards will stop our humiliation. Arakan is our birthplace. Being recognized as Rohingya means getting access to all our rights to citizenship. We don't want other Rakhine ethnic communities attacking us again and again. We want to have our freedom of movement.'* (B04, a 35-year-old male)

*'If we go there, they call us 'Bengali'. By 'Bengali' they mean Bangladeshi. When we are here [Bangladesh], we are called Burmese. Can you tell us where we actually belong? We must have a place to call home. Or else, where will we go? We were born and brought up in Burma, not here. Now they humiliate us, saying "you're Bangladeshi".'* (B03, a 45 year old male)

For both IDPs and Rohingyas freedoms of movement and other rights were frequently identified as key factors that would enhance and maintain their dignity. However, due to their current experiences of living in temporary accommodation (often congested camps), the notion of freedom and rights were often considered a 'luxury'.

#### 4.4.3 Shelter, food and other basic needs

A decent shelter, food and meeting other basic needs were commonly associated with the IDPs and Rohingya notion of dignity, as being **'fundamental to a person's life and identity'**. Rohingyas felt reasonably well supported by various humanitarian assistance. However, this was not always the case for the IDPs who had insufficient basic necessities so that dignity for them was often related to **access to basic and life-saving provisions** such as food, water, clothes, and medicine.

*'Dignity is having something to eat, water to use for washing, and something to wear.'* (A72, a male IDP, Herat)

*'In my opinion, dignity is to have shelter, and the most important thing is a home, which we don't have at the moment.'* (A251, a male IDP, Kunduz)

This element of dignity was somewhat different for the displaced Rohingyas. Due to the care and welcome they received on arrival at the Bangladeshi host community, such as receiving food, shelter, and other necessities, the Rohingyas felt dignified, which helped them to heal.

*'After landing in Teknaf, Cox's bazar, the locals helped us a lot. They helped us by offering us rice, lentils, oil, sugar, puffed rice, biscuits, bread and many other things. Their help sustained us for next 5 days until the government forces started helping us. Some of the Bangladeshi people also offered us money. Thousands of Rohingya people watched them being kind to us. We will never forget the help of these Bangladeshi people.'* (B14, a 52 years old male)

#### 4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has detailed the conceptualisation of dignity among both the internally displaced people in Afghanistan, and the Rohingyas who were forcibly displaced from Myanmar to Bangladesh. It has utilised a bottom-up approach applying respondents' views and feelings to portray both the IDPs and Rohingya perception of dignity to see whether this has been reduced because of their individual and collective lived experiences. Drawing upon their lived experiences prior to and during their displacement, the IDPs and Rohingyas had elements of dignity which were similar but, importantly, other aspects were conceptualised differently. Each group's idea of dignity was based upon their lived experiences and linked to their community's and cultural perspectives of dignity.

The findings confirm that when adopting a bottom-up approach, through the eyes and voices of the participants themselves, dignity is complex and has multiple meanings. On the surface some aspects of dignity appear similar but, on closer examination, the detail varies based on the differing experiences of the groups and slight differences in their socio-economic, political, cultural and religious contexts. It is, therefore, important to appreciate the diversity of the concept of dignity rather than accepting a ubiquitous definition or conceptualisation.

Dignity might well be an 'unspecified and amorphous' concept (Kamir, 2006: 194) which does open it up to misuse in decision-making. However, this same flexibility is also a strength, allowing it to be shaped by the political, cultural and religious contexts experienced by groups and allowing those who are marginalised to draw out issues which are of importance to them.

The evidence provided in this chapter builds on the emerging literature that explains dignity in displacement (see Holloway and Fan, 2018; Kandiwal, 2019). While some aspects such as social; religious; and economic dimensions of dignity (Holloway and Fan, 2018) can be useful, the evidence provided in this chapter furthers the existing conceptualisation. In doing so, it is clear that for both IDPs and Rohingya refugees dignity is a multi-dimensional concept which includes aspects such as safety (including protection from sexual violence) and security (protection of their lives), identity, desire to live a peaceful life, aspiration to achieve knowledge and education, a decent home and other basic needs self-reliance and self-sufficiency, mutual respect and compassion, religion and Islamic values, culture and freedom/human rights. These were aspects of dignity for these groups but clearly, many will also form key components of dignity in other contexts as perceived through an individual's or a group's lived experiences, what is important is that the concept is complex and multi-dimensional.

Clearly, as noted by Holloway and Fan (2018), for Rohingya refugees, and for IDPs, dignity includes social, religious and economic dimensions. However, it also includes dimensions of security and identity.

## **Chapter – 5: Humanitarian Actors’ perceptions of dignity**

## 5.1 Chapter overview

Humanitarian assistance plays a pivotal role in supporting the livelihoods of the IDPs in Afghanistan and displaced Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh. The importance of humanitarian assistance is acknowledged by the IDPs and Rohingyas, as well as by various actors including the governments, UN agencies, donors, and (I)NGOs. Life in the camps or in the host community for the IDPs and Rohingyas is precarious and humanitarian support is vital for meeting immediate basic needs and restoring some sense of dignity. However, it is also important to remember that humanitarian assistance should be provided in a manner that does not affect the dignity of the IDPs or Rohingyas. This chapter offers an account of how the humanitarian actors, who are involved in supporting the IDPs in Afghanistan and displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh, perceive dignity in relation to those they are helping. These views are then contrasted with the narratives of the IDPs and the Rohingyas about their experience of humanitarian support.

## 5.2 Conceptualisations of dignity among humanitarian aid workers

Compared to the complexity of dignity from the perspectives of IDPs and Rohingya refugees the view of humanitarian workers and government officials tended to focus on safety, the provision of enough aid, particularly the provision of necessities, ensuring that aid was provided respectfully (respecting customs and religious values) and following the rules of their organisation in the provision of aid. Humanitarian and government officials gave less emphasis to education, independence and self-reliance. Whilst recognising that sustainable development was important, humanitarian actors and government staff had, at best, a limited focus on durable solutions such as sustainable job opportunities and proper housing.

As with the IDPs and Rohingya refugees themselves the humanitarian workers and government officials who looked after them conceptualised dignity based on their experience of working with these groups. Overall, the conceptualisation of dignity expressed by humanitarian actors and government officials was far simpler, confined to the provision of aid in a respectful way. Their ideas revolved around:

- Respect for culture and religious values in the provision of aid;
- Provision of sufficient aid;
- Consultation in the provision of aid.

Whilst the issues above largely encapsulated the rather simple, almost unidimensional conceptualisation of dignity there were aspects of these issues which were of importance in only one of the regions:

- Respect for individuals in the provision of aid – equal rights, freedom and autonomy (Afghanistan only);
- Problems with aid distribution (Afghanistan only).

### 5.3 Common features of dignity through the perceptions of Humanitarian workers and government officials

This section provides evidence of the aspects of dignity where we found significant similarities between the perceptions of the humanitarian workers and government officials in both Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Whilst there is general agreement in these areas, a reading of the separate reports (Kamruzzaman, *et.al.* 2021 and Williams, *et.al.* 2021) displays nuanced differences between the ideas emanating from each country.

#### 5.3.1 Respect for culture and religious values in the provision of aid

Respect was largely discussed in the context of **respecting IDPs culture, religion, and values** which might include the need to respect their language as well. This was considered essential by most aid workers and government officials and most considered that the dignity of IDPs and Rohingyas was respected through the provision of aid and in the way in which aid was distributed.

*‘Dignity means to respect IDPs culture during distribution and training, to not expose IDPs in the media without their permission, and to consider gender issues. For instance, males and females shouldn’t be brought together in the same committee, at training, or in meetings as it is against their culture.’ (AS 284, female humanitarian worker, Nangarhar)*

*‘Dignity means to respect someone’s religion, culture, language, personality, and character. If we misbehave with IDPs, it means that we have harmed their dignity.’ (AS 285, male humanitarian worker, Herat)*

*‘About 75% women know handicrafts. .... These skills make it easier for them to cope in different environment.’ (A female humanitarian worker of UNFPA)*

*‘A positive thing is that they have unity. You can motivate them through religion. If we can motivate them through imams (religious leaders), they can contribute in development works. Their social bonding is also good. They have good respect for the majhi system.’ (A consultant of ADB in Bangladesh)*

In the Rohingya camp in Bangladesh some humanitarian workers tried to ensure full uptake of services by using the Rohingya language, exchanging respectful greetings, listening to individuals in order to show that they valued the Rohingya people, persuading reluctant refugees to accept support (e.g. modern medical treatment), offering female only contact if necessary.

*‘Women want them to be checked by a female doctor. I mainly check kids below the age of 5. A male colleague of mine takes care of the rest of the patients. Here, we see that women feel shy even if he needs to check their blood pressure. This is why we ask whether they would like to be treated by a male*

*doctor, or if they prefer they can see a female doctor.’ (A medical doctor working for an INGO)*

### **5.3.2 Provision of sufficient aid – shelter and food**

In both Bangladesh and Afghanistan there was a desire to ensure there was sufficient aid to cover basic needs. Afghan aid workers recognised this was a problem due to limited resources and the lack of a stable government.

It is very difficult to respond to all of the needs of IDPs, returnees, or refugees because this requires integrated and multi-sector interventions that need huge funds, and we know how much the funds have been shrunk. So most of the time, the humanitarian needs provided by the aid agencies are driven by the amount of funding they have. **AS 09, a male staff survey respondent, Badghis**

People are too poor to cope and the government is too weak to respond, the aid provided by the international community is great, but it is not enough. **AS 19, a male staff survey respondent, Badakhshan**

Winter kits for IDPs do address their important needs, however, available budgets are woefully insufficient to meet needs, leading to a contentious and difficult process of targeting/prioritisation. **AS 88, a male staff survey respondent, Kabul**

IDPs don’t receive what they need because there are too many of them, and the number increases day by day. The government doesn’t have anything to help them. Our government is very poor, and can’t reach out to every one of them. International and local NGOs have been helping them and providing them with health services, educational facilities, shelter, clothes and other things, but these aren’t enough, and can’t help them overcome the problems they have. **AS 301, a male humanitarian worker, Herat**

In Bangladesh the situation looked more positive, government officials stated that the government taken actions to ensure the Rohingyas received shelter and had their basic needs met, and they therefore claimed that they had upheld the Rohingyas’ dignity.

*‘The government is providing them with education, the medical support, fire power, food, shelter, water and sanitation, everything.’ (A Senior Assistant Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh)*

*‘My ministry is doing its best in ensuring that basic needs such as food, clothing and health are met for the Rohingyas. We are working hard to ensure that no Rohingya is suffering from malnutrition. The field hospitals are modern and offer better services than*



*many local hospitals.’ (A senior government official, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief)*

### **5.3.3 Consultation in the provision of aid**

In both areas humanitarian workers claimed to consult with and listen to those in needs. For example, in Bangladesh early food provision consisted of just rice, lentils and oil. The Rohingyas found this unacceptable, and the WFP recognised the limitation of their food assistance and latterly initiated an E-voucher card to ensure that Rohingyas could use their freedom of choice to purchase both a more varied diet and other items in the camps.

*“We are increasing number of E-voucher Shops and people can access these E-voucher shops easily. ... They can get 770 tk per month per person and use the e-vouchers when they want to go to purchase their shopping.” (A male humanitarian worker of World Food Program)*

## **5.4 Divergent features of dignity through the perceptions of IDPs and Rohingyas**

The issues discussed below are related to the common areas of dignity but parts of these were important to the workers/government officials in only one of the countries.

### **5.4.1 Equal rights, freedom and autonomy (more of an issue in Afghanistan)**

Similar to the IDPs, humanitarian actors and senior government staff linked the concept of dignity to a person’s fundamental **human rights**. Humanitarian actors and government staff also stated that in order for IDPs to maintain their dignity, they should be informed and knowledgeable about their rights. This problem was so important in Afghanistan as it was recognised that there was often not sufficient aid to support all of those in need.

*‘Dignity means to respect someone through all their humanitarian rights.’ (AS 279, female humanitarian worker, Herat)*

*‘If we consider human rights principles during our assistance, then it is possible to consider people’s dignity.’ (AS 286, male humanitarian worker, Kandahar)*

*‘Organisations should inform IDPs of their rights so that their dignity and honour can be maintained and they can enjoy their basic rights like every other citizen. Most institutions respond to the needs of the IDPs, not to their rights. The strategy our office has taken will inform IDPs of their rights, in order to advocate for them.’ (AS 330, male senior government staff)*

### **5.4.2 Problems in aid distribution (more of an issue in Afghanistan)**

In Afghanistan staff reported a **lack of coordination between humanitarian agencies and government organisations**. Again the issue arose partly due to low levels of provision but also

because of managerial shortfalls or distribution through local groups or local governance systems which did not always employ fair or non-discriminatory distribution systems

*'If people don't receive their aid on time, or in a proper way, this will harm their dignity. This occurs because of poor management from the migration department, and their lack of coordination with NGOs. For example, if the migration department shares the list of IDPs and returnees with relevant organisations, this may solve our problems.'* **AS 284, a female humanitarian worker, Nangarhar**

### **5.5 What was missing in the Humanitarian workers and government conceptualisations of dignity**

Many aspects important to the IDPs and Rohingya refugees were missing from the humanitarian workers and government official's conception of dignity. However, two stand out as particularly important: education; and self-reliance or self-sufficiency. In the discussions with IDPs and the Rohingya refugees these were essential.

*'Providing a working environment can restore a person's lost dignity. In my opinion, honour and dignity mean being financially self-sufficient.'* (A199, a male IDP, Mazar)

However, humanitarian actors and senior government staff gave far less thought to these aspects, their absence from official consideration is particularly disturbing as they were so important to the IDPs and refugees. At best, humanitarian actors and senior government staff, had a limited focus on durable solutions. Despite this there was recognition that sustainable development was important and had to encompass long-term solutions such as job opportunities, proper housing and new supportive communities. However, these ideal forms of support were discussed more being absent and unattainable.

*'There is a very limited programme on long-term solutions, due to funding shortages and lack of attention of donors to permanent solutions.'* (AS 50, a female staff survey respondent, Kabul)

*'In addition to providing urgent and emergency assistance to IDPs and returnees, there are programmes for sustainable solutions, to integrate IDPs with the community. For example, skills development, economic integration, and other programmes to help IDPs of different ages to integrate with society. ... There is a need for sustainable solutions in the field of IDP integration, as there is a lack of budget, lack of good coordination, and a lack of donors in this area, as most donors provide funding for IDPs emergency needs, not for their integration with society. There is no problem with the amount of land, the land is available now but there is still a need for international donors in the field of construction and shelter.'* (AS 330, a male senior staff member, Kabul)

Clearly the focus on short-termism and other challenges in provision of humanitarian aid prevents the long-term resettlement and re-integration: it sustains a dependency culture and diminishes the IDPs' dignity. Whilst this is almost understandable in the case of the Rohingya

refugees because Bangladesh needs them to return to Myanmar and find sustainable solutions. It still impacts negatively on sustainable development for both the Rohingyas and for Bangladesh more broadly as the refugees are a drain on their resources rather than adding to their future prosperity. In Afghanistan this short-termism is entirely unacceptable and is certainly one aspect which prevents Afghanistan advancing their sustainable development goals.

## **5.6 IDPs' and Rohingya's perspectives of dignity through humanitarian assistance**

Through the surveys, interviews and storytelling IDPs and Rohingya refugees told us about their experiences of receiving aid. Their reports included both their satisfaction with the assistance provided and whether or not they felt that their dignity was protected during this process. Here again there were some similar issues.

- Not all recipients felt their dignity was protected through the distribution of aid, often because their values were not respected;
- Insufficient aid or dissatisfaction with the aid provided;
- Consultation

There were also issues that pertained to only one region.

- Aid is unfairly or corruptly distributed (Afghanistan)

### **5.6.1 Lack of respect in the distribution of aid**

Many felt that their dignity was not protected during aid distribution or in their general situation. There were many reasons for this, some of which only apply to one of the groups. For example, whilst some reported being well treated there were reports of poor treatment by staff, in Afghanistan this included sexual harassment and physical and verbal mistreatment by staff.

*'We heard that some organisations forced women into sexual abuse. In the same way, I think assembling men and women in one place to receive aid is against our dignity' (A198, a male IDP, Kunduz)*

*'After the assessment or once the assistance has been provided, they are phoning again and having irresponsible talk, meaning asking for sexual favours in exchange for rewards' (A08, a female IDP, Jalalabad)*

*'We have a complaint about the [xxx aid organisation]. It has bad employees and people. They behave badly with migrants. They abuse women, children, and the elderly and use very bad words. Sometimes, they even raise their hands to our women to hit them, and it harms the dignity of migrants' (A71, a male IDP, Herat)*

In both areas there were issues concerning women's dignity, in Bangladesh this concerned queuing for the use of toilets alongside men, the lack of appropriate toilet and washing

facilities posed a significant threat to a woman's dignity due to their cultural and segregation practices that are key elements of their faith. In both it was distribution to men and women simultaneously and in Afghanistan this included being squashed up against men.

*'Some staff or soldiers misbehave during the distribution of aid, by pushing women, touching them, shouting at them, and so on. This all harms the honour and dignity of migrants, especially women' (A101, a male IDP, Herat)*

*'Bathrooms in the camps are makeshift, surrounded by boards and the floor is only soil. Some people complain that bad guys create holes to peep through the boards to watch women bathing. We try to prevent these issues.'* (Anonymous, an interviewee working for a humanitarian organisation in Bangladesh)

However, it is important to note that not all IDPs and Rohingya refugees were dissatisfied, some reported that humanitarian staff always **considered their dignity** during the provision of assistance, and treated them well.

*'They consider our dignity, and treat us in a good way. For example, they assembled us for assistance and asked us about our problems and challenges, and then distributed the aid' (A227, a male IDP, Nangarhar)*

*'Everything is fair and impartial. Our representative is a nice person and she is following up on our affairs here so patiently. When the aid arrives here, our representative coordinates with the source people to distribute the aid and when it is our turn, we receive our share.'* (A147, a female IDP, Kabul)

*'Honestly, the NGO people are really nice to us. Sometimes, when an elderly person goes to collect relief, they send their volunteers to deliver the reliefs at that elderly person's doorstep. Sometimes, they come to our homes to know about how we are doing and whether we need something or not.'* (B15, a 40 year old male)

### **5.6.2 Insufficient aid or dissatisfaction with the aid provided**

Clearly, in both areas the aid provided was limited and this brought problems. In Bangladesh tended to concern details such as the variety of foods provided.

*'The NGOs give us only rice, lentils and oil. It's really hard to live on these bare minimums. We cannot buy some vegetables. How long can a person endure only on rice and lentils?'* (B02, a 30 year old female)

The main concern in Bangladesh was the lack of a proper, certified, education system.

*'Education is the same for all of us. Here, kids and grownups, all study in the same*

*class.’ (B17, a 30 year old female)*

*‘If we can’t go back to Burma or the process gets delayed then, it would be better if class and grade-based schools are introduced here for our children.’ (B31, a 34 year old male)*

However, in Afghanistan the issues concerned the failure to relieve absolute poverty, particularly when the IDPs were not in camps. The aid given is limited and not according to their needs. Many IDPs lack access to the most basic provisions for daily living, including clean water; food; adequate shelter; necessities for cooking such as gas, oil, and kitchen equipment/utensils; clothing and shoes; heating for warmth in winter; and electricity. In addition, they are often unable to access basic healthcare services and educational facilities and equipment, and employment opportunities are severely lacking. The poorest are female headed households.

*‘Firstly, the lack of shelter is crucial to us. Winter is coming soon and our places will be wet and our children will get sick easily.’ (A43, a female IDP, Herat)*

*‘Our infants are malnourished and do not have enough milk to drink.’ (A67, a male IDP, Herat)*

*‘Due to a lack of access to sanitary drinking water, our children are getting sicknesses like diarrhoea. We want to ask the government to prioritize our access to sanitary water.’ (A04, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

*‘Last year, most families and neighbours lost their children because they were sick, and there was no doctor or medication to treat sick children.’ (A111, a male IDP, Herat)*

*‘We need money, my child died due to a lack of money for a heater.’ (A162, a female IDP, Kabul)*

IDPs commented that when they did receive assistance, it was often **late and sporadic**, and sometimes delayed by months or even years.

*‘It took 6–7 months to receive help and the result was only a tent, and our dignity was damaged because we lived in tents’ (A129, a male IDP, Jalalabad)*

Despite this, some IDPs (usually those in camps) and quite a few Rohingya refugees insisted that they were **satisfied with the assistance that they received**, and that their dignity had not been harmed during the process of receiving aid and other humanitarian assistance.

*'On the issue of dignity and honour, I should say that thank God, it is not offended. Our representatives [from humanitarian actors] check us daily and notice our problems. We are fully satisfied with the contributions of the organisations. They have been very helpful to us. They built toilets here, a water well for access to water, and a bathroom. Their staff treated us very well and honestly' (A104, a female IDP, Herat)*

*'Honestly, the NGO people are really nice to us. Sometimes, when an elderly person goes to collect relief, they send their volunteers to deliver the reliefs at that elderly person's doorstep. Sometimes, they come to our homes to know about how we are doing and whether we need something or not.'* (B15, a 40 year old male)

### **5.6.3 Consultation, Short-termism, and corruption in aid distribution**

Consultation occurred for both groups. For the Rohingya it tended to happen through community leaders, whereas in Afghanistan individual IDPs were often consulted. Many IDPs reported that government and humanitarian organisations conduct numerous **needs assessment surveys or interviews with IDPs**, however this work is often **not followed-up or acted upon**, which means that the situations of extreme poverty that IDPs have found themselves in can never improve.

*'Government and NGOs have consulted with us on many issues, but actually, none of their plans have been implemented' (A10, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

*'Sometimes they collect our data, notice our needs, and consult with us, but the aid is not according to our needs' (A12, a male IDP, Badakhshan)*

Above (5.3.3) we noted that Rohingya concerns about the lack of a varied diet had been listened to and acted upon. Similarly, although the Bangladeshi Government have been reluctant to permit their certified education system to be used in camps both they and aid agencies have now managed to agree a new education system which is slowly being rolled out. These examples show that the government and agencies try to respond to consultations.

Both IDPs and the Rohingya remarked that the aid that organisations provide is only a **short-term solution**, and cannot help them to become independent or self-reliant.

*'The aid was limited and cannot lead us to a bright future. We haven't received any sustainable support which could solve our problems. They are not providing a critical service, it is all temporary aid' (A205, a male IDP, Mazar)*

Moreover, in Afghanistan only some IDPs stated that the **distribution of the aid is unfair and corrupt**, as it is mainly given to the families and friends of the distributors, or the more powerful people in the community.

*'In some cases, the distributor is from other ethnic groups and we ask him to give us our share from the aid and he says "no, these are for my ethnic group, and you cannot take them".' (A164, a female IDP, Kabul)*

*'No one asks about poor people, and all the assistance goes to the homes of tribe elders and powerful people' (A135, a male IDP, Jalalabad)*

Some IDPs also reported that **certain vulnerable groups often missed out on humanitarian aid**, such as people with disabilities, widows, very poor people, and new arrivals who had yet to register for aid. This did not occur in Bangladesh.

*'Widows, orphans, and the disabled did not receive help because they have no power and no one asked about their rights' (A129, a male IDP, Jalalabad)*

*'There are many disabled people who are in urgent need, but there is no supporting service for them. There is some financial aid and materials, but they are not delivered to all, and many people miss the aid, without any hope of having a better situation' (A160, a female IDP, Kabul)*

## 5.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has explained how dignity in displacement is conceptualised by the humanitarian actors in Afghanistan and in Bangladesh. Since humanitarian support plays an important role for the IDPs in Afghanistan and the displaced Rohingya refugees in Bangladeshi camps, it is imperative to understand how they perceive dignity in providing aid and other support.

In both Afghanistan and Bangladesh humanitarian actors and government officials have a relatively straightforward conceptualisation of dignity in respect of IDPs and Rohingya Refugees. For the most part this is centred around the provision of sufficient aid, respect for cultural and religious values and for human rights. In camps, both in Bangladesh and Afghanistan the aid agencies performed better in all these respects than they did in the case of the many IDPs in Afghanistan who were scattered in small groups living with host communities. In these scattered groups of IDPs in Afghanistan humanitarian assistance was frequently described as inadequate and insufficient, and unaligned with IDPs needs and priorities. Many IDPs felt that their dignity had been damaged during the assistance process, due to chaotic procedures, mistreatment and abuse by staff, corruption in the distribution of aid, and a lack of consideration of IDPs culture, religion, and values.

In contrast, in the camps, particularly those in Bangladesh, the Rohingyas stated that they felt humanitarian actors generally treated them with respect. They felt they are safe in Bangladesh, especially compared to their sufferings in Myanmar. Nevertheless, there have been notable dissatisfactions about lack of variation in food assistance. Lack of education for Rohingya children, and shared toilet facilities also seem to be key issues in maintaining Rohingya dignity and privacy of the women in particular. Privacy was also a concern of IDP women stationed in camps and/or living in tents. There are also concerns (for both IDPs and refugees) about some mistreatment by the humanitarian actors while quality of the healthcare was also mentioned by some Rohingyas as having a negative impact on their dignity.

Possibly the most important finding is the lack of long-term plans for helping either group to become self-sufficient. For both IDPs and Rohingya refugees being financially self-sufficient and self-reliant was core to their dignity and was one of the reasons they so valued education, it permitted children to reach their potential. In both Bangladesh and Afghanistan provision is short-term focused and does not look at sustainable futures for these groups. This sustains a dependency culture and diminishes the dignity of both IDPs and Rohingya refugees. This impacts negatively on sustainable development for both the groups (the Rohingyas and the IDPs) and for the countries (Bangladesh and Afghanistan). It is one element which prevents the states advancing their sustainable development goals and it needs to be addressed.



**Chapter 6: Which way forward: Challenges and Sustainable Solutions for those internally displaced in Afghanistan and the forcibly displaced Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh.**

## 6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the suggested future sustainable solutions for the IDPs in Afghanistan and forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees currently situated in Cox's Bazar.

Previous chapters outline the displacement journeys of the IDPs and the Rohingyas; their experience of violence; how they conceptualise dignity; how the humanitarian actors perceive dignity; and, the effectiveness of humanitarian provision and whether it protected dignity in displacement. This chapter considers long-term dignified solutions to the plight of IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. First it sets out the challenges to any long-term solutions. There are several challenges associated with resolving the crises within Afghanistan and Bangladesh. One of the most significant challenges is providing sustainable solutions to resolve both crises and reduce the impact of the forced migration and internal displacement upon the individual and collective dignity of the IDPs and the Rohingyas. The chapter goes on to consider how these challenges might be resolved. Unlike earlier chapters some of the challenges and their solutions are particular to one or other of the groups. For this reason, this chapter will look at each situation separately.

## 6.2 Resolving the Crises: IDPs in Afghanistan

In this section the challenges which need to be resolved will be briefly considered before moving on to discuss potential solutions.

### 6.2.1 Identifying the Challenges - *IDP in Afghanistan.*

The challenges of resolving the IDP crises in Afghanistan are complex due to the lack of peace and instability within the country, which has recently escalated due to the Taliban regaining full control and the uncertainty of what this will mean for the future. Multiple challenges were identified in relation to the provision of aid and assistance to IDPs in Afghanistan, and one of the main challenges was the disparity between the perceptions of humanitarian actors and IDPs with regards to dignity (see Chapter – 5 for more details). They disagree about:

1. IDPs most important needs and requirements;
2. the extent to which dignity is considered in the provision of humanitarian aid;
3. the extent to which IDPs views and needs are considered and incorporated in the planning, design, and implementation of aid programmes; and
4. the treatment of IDPs during the provision of assistance.

(Kamruzzaman et al, 2021, p. 96).

In addition, the humanitarian actors described the following as some of the main challenges:

- insecurity/volatile security situation on the ground;
- working with limited budgets;

- corruption, poor management, and lack of coordination between humanitarian, development, and government organisations;
- disruption by local elders, warlords, and other stakeholders;
- identifying IDPs and those most in need;
- cultural and language differences; and
- insecurity and the politicisation of aid.

The volatile political and security situation poses a major challenge for the provision of aid to IDPs in Afghanistan. The government actors as well as humanitarian actors agreed that a lack of security on the ground meant that government and humanitarian agencies could not distribute aid properly and many vulnerable IDPs missed out on life-saving humanitarian assistance.

*We had some incidents where we lost some of our assistance. Some people with guns came and just took the assistance meant for IDPs, and we can't go there again. (AS 317, a male senior staff member, Kabul)*

*The most common challenge is insecurity. Due to the lack of security, organisations cannot cover all of the people in need properly. (AS 287, a male humanitarian worker, Herat)*

*The challenge that we usually face is insecurity. Insecurity is a reason for poor distribution as we are unable to carry out a proper survey. (AS 289, a male humanitarian worker, Herat)*

Volatile insecurity also made it particularly difficult for humanitarian organisations to provide assistance in hard-to-reach communities.

*This has been a war-devastated country for 34 years, there are a lot of remote areas that are not accessible due to security reasons ... These areas are disregarded from assistance, no improvements have been made in the last 16 years, not in education, not in livelihood, not in medicine. No one has thought about these areas, no donors have focused on these areas. .... Most of the donors are considering the cities. Donors need to consider these remote areas too; their situation is extremely bad and needs to be given the same attention.' (AS 292, a male humanitarian worker, Kandahar)*

One of the multiple challenges in the delivery of aid to the IDPs was having to work with limited budgets and funding, and a limited number of supplies. Humanitarian actors reported that the sheer number of IDPs and returnees created difficulties in providing aid for everyone who required it.

*'We have challenges in our community, especially a limited amount of aid and a large number of IDPs and returnees.' (AS 284, a female humanitarian worker, Nangarhar)*

The lack of funding available for aid and the instability of the government, also reduced the possibilities of finding durable solutions for IDPs, despite recognising the importance of

creating long term solutions that included job opportunities to increase the self-reliance of the IDPs.

*'There is a very limited programme on long-term solutions, due to funding shortages and lack of attention of donors to permanent solutions.'* (AS 50, a female staff survey respondent, Kabul)

*'People are too poor to cope and the government is too weak to respond, the aid provided by the international community is great, but it is not enough.'* (AS 19, a male staff survey respondent, Badakhshan)

While limited resources and funding presented a key obstacle there have been concerns around corruption and mismanagement of aid. Some IDPs claimed that humanitarian organisations offered aid only to those who are known to them and in some cases aid was disrupted by local community elders, warlords and other stakeholders who wanted to keep it for themselves.

*'We want to donate directly to the people who really deserve it, but sometimes we face a lot of problems in the form of stakeholders because they want to keep everything for themselves.'* (AS 312, a male humanitarian worker, Nangarhar)

Other challenges included difficulties in identifying IDPs and distinguishing them from members of the host community, which was also a key challenge as many believed they also deserved humanitarian assistance. Aid workers also reported challenges relating cultural differences, especially in regard to some IDPs attitudes toward education for girls and women.

*'If we do not distribute aid to the host community, who also deserve it, then we are discriminating against them.'* (AS 314, a male humanitarian worker, Nangarhar)

*'The local people are ignorant about education, they are against education for females.'* (AS 288, a male humanitarian worker, Herat)

This section identified the challenges of providing aid to the IDPs. It also noted the lack of durable solutions being used to resolve the crises, there is a dearth of long-term solutions, such as education and creation of job opportunities to increase self-reliance.

The following section focuses upon the Rohingya crises in Bangladesh, utilising findings from the survey data to portray the options available in maintaining the Rohingyas dignity and providing a sustainable solution.

### **6.2.2 The Way Forward in Afghanistan: Policy and Practice Solutions to the IDP crises**

Despite various support activities by the humanitarian organisations and the Afghanistan Government, it is clear that much more needs to be done to develop durable and sustainable solutions for the many problems and challenges experienced by IDPs in Afghanistan. Towards a sustainable solution to their plights, the IDPs have called for development support in the following areas:

- the provision of land and sustainable shelter;
- construction of clinics, schools, capacity building centres, roads, factories, and power stations;
- restoration of their houses, roads, and land;
- agricultural assistance;
- the provision of employment and business opportunities;
- skills development and training;
- education for their children; and
- peacebuilding.

An adequate shelter is one of the most important basic requirements for IDPs, and many IDPs reported that the lack of a sufficient shelter and permanent place to live was a significant threat to their dignity. IDPs called for a dedicated and safe place to live and the development of long-term sustainable and affordable housing to replace temporary accommodation such as tents.

*'We need help and support from the government. If we do not have facilities, how will our situation get better? We need shelter and a safe place to live for the rest of our lives.'* (A159, a female IDP, Kabul)

*'If they want to protect our honour and dignity, I ask the government and all humanitarian organisations to hear our voice and help us to be able to pay our rent or provide shelter for us.'* (A203, a male IDP, Mazar)

For a durable solution with wider impact on future generations IDPs asked for help from the government and humanitarian organisations to rebuild and repair the houses and roads that were destroyed in the war, and to restore damaged land which they depended on for their livelihoods. They saw the need for developing suitable infrastructure for example constructing new roads, power stations to generate electricity, and factories to facilitate the creation of jobs for IDPs. Some also suggested that aid programmes should focus on building and supplying medical clinics, schools, and capacity building centres so that they can have better access to healthcare and training opportunities and their children can receive a proper education. In terms of job creation they saw it as essential that the training centres and education prepare them and their children for new types of employment through skills development and training courses to improve the IDPs' future prospects and chances of securing long-term employment.

*'Our children are willing to get an education, but they can't because they don't have access to books, notebooks, or stationery.'* (108, a female IDP, Herat)

*'Our original places and homes are now destroyed, they should rebuild them, or they should donate cash so we can build our homes, we do not want house ovens.'* (A131, a male IDP, Jalalabad)

*'Government and international organisations must develop factories, where we can work and support our families.'* (A204, a male IDP, Mazar)

Again with a view to sustainable self-reliance IDPs suggested a focus on aid to support income generating opportunities. For example, cash-based aid to permit the starting of farming opportunities and assistance with livestock production so that they can meet their own needs with autonomy and dignity, or loans to enable them to start small business ventures which would help them to become self-sufficient.

*'We need cash transfers to properly meet our own needs.'* (A202, a male IDP, Mazar)

Finally, and most importantly, IDPs urged the government to work towards peace and negotiate an end to the conflict in Afghanistan.

*'I request the government to bring us peace to rescue us from these adversities and miseries, I am worried about my future and my children's future as well. I think about peace in our country every single day.'* (A203, a male IDP, Mazar)

Humanitarian actors also felt if peace and security were achieved, IDPs may be able to regain their dignity and return to their places of origin, successfully re-settle in new places, or integrate into their host communities.

*'This is a political issue .... the local conflict needs to be solved, and the war needs to be ended. .... Everybody was happy in their hometown and if war is ended, humanitarian assistance can be provided in an effective way and jobs will be created.'* (AS 292, a male humanitarian worker, Kandahar)

Overall IDPs called for support in 10 areas, almost all of which involve long-term solutions:

<b>1</b>	<b>provision of land and sustainable shelter</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>construction of clinics, schools, capacity building centres</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>construction of roads, factories, and power stations</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>restoration of houses, roads, and land</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>agricultural assistance</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>education for all children (girls and boys)</b>

7	<b>the provision of employment opportunities</b>
8	<b>capital for business investment</b>
9	<b>skills development and training</b>
10	<b>Peacebuilding</b>

In the short-term humanitarian and government organisations should ensure the dignified provision of sufficient necessities to all IDPs to provide for their needs. The aid also needs to be more effectively and respectfully distributed. Particular attention should be paid to providing a greater level of psychosocial support for IDPs, particularly those affected by conflict, war and violence, including children.

More importantly, aid needs to focus on long-term solutions. Humanitarian and government organisations need to focus on sustainable development activities and on creating income-generating opportunities in rural areas, many already exist in the cities. It also needs to begin to provide long-term homes and communities where IDPs can live. This will require land and materials then the IDPs can be trained to build the infrastructure themselves. Sustainable communities will require income-generating opportunities, reskilling of workers and the building of the infrastructure: factories or other ways to provide new employment opportunities; roads; health clinics; shops; and, schools to educate the children, particular attention should be paid to overcoming cultural barriers to ensure education for girls and jobs for women achieved through an Islamic idea of feminism (Yamani, 1996).

These sustainable solutions are necessary in order to provide the robust basis on which peace can be built – continued displacement has not just been a consequence of the war in Afghanistan, it has also contributed to its continuation: high unemployment, extreme poverty, lack of human and physical security and feeling of hopelessness among many IDPS, have opened them up as vulnerable to be recruited as foot soldiers by all parties to the ongoing war. Therefore, sustainable living is necessary to peace. However, delivery of a real sustainable future requires peace and security, it is a chicken and egg situation. Peace cannot be delivered without sustainable solutions and sustainable solutions cannot be delivered without peace.

### 6.3 Resolving the Crises: Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

In this section the challenges which need to be resolved will be briefly considered before moving on to discuss potential solutions.

#### 6.3.1 Identifying the Challenges - *The Rohingya Crises*

One of the most significant challenges for Rohingyas' currently residing at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, is the amount of time they have remained in the camp, and the detrimental impact this has had upon their health and well-being, which is not conducive for a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crises. Despite Cox's Bazar being labelled as a temporary haven, residing within the camps has reduced their self-sufficiency and fostered dependency, which is alien to the Rohingya culture.

The Rohingya crisis is now in its fifth year, and the international community has been unable to resolve the situation. Bangladesh has had to continue to house the Rohingyas, to give them shelter but this can only be a temporary solution. Ahsan (2018) suggests that if positive long-term solutions are not found Bangladesh may have to repatriate the Rohingyas even if there is no resolution to the crisis. Ahsan (2018) further suggests that if they feel they can get away with it Myanmar may force other Rohingyas to flee and forcibly migrate. The crisis is therefore on a precipice and if not resolved it may deepen. The challenge for the international community, is to identify a resolution that positively engages and unites the local and regional powers in a collective approach that provides a safe and sustainable solution. An Adviser to the Bangladesh Prime Minister reiterates the importance of finding solutions to prevent further violence and destabilisation:

*'We are trying to present an argument to the international community [to think of a solution] before the crisis destabilises the region, before it becomes another centre of drug business, before it becomes another centre for the arms trade where ammunition will start flowing easily. Let us take our views of a long-term perspective. These people will not remain long here. We are holding them back. We are doing our best so that human traffickers are not taking them to other parts of the world.'* (An Adviser to the Prime Minister:)

In addition to the above, there are environmental and ecological challenges because of the Rohingya crises. This is due to the construction of the camps at Cox's Bazar, which had a significant impact upon the lives and well-being of the hosting community, due to the deforestation (4,300 acres of hills and forests in the green zone), which the locals claim has changed temperatures within Cox's Bazar, and reduced industrial opportunities for local trades people and the broader community. Other environmental and ecological challenges have emerged due to the sheer volume of the additional garbage created by the Cox's Bazar camps, and their inability to dispose of the refuse in an environmental and sustainable manner.



*'This area has lost its natural beauty. Now the only thing we see is barren land, shelters and heat. The beauty has gone.'* (Lady 8, Host Community Focus Group)

Other issues that have emerged as a result to of the crises include changes to markets. The influx of foreign aid workers and the bulk purchase of food locally has increased local prices for food, clothes and other necessary commodities meaning that members of the host community find it more difficult to afford the increased prices for food and clothes. The presence of the camps has also altered the demands on the local infrastructure due to increased use of roads and local services such as medical provision. More roads have been built but the pressure on these and medical care is heavy and has impacted negatively on the host community. One of the biggest challenges for the Government and humanitarian actors was to increase help and support for the local community:

*'If you give more facility, more resources to the host community, community mobilization to the host community, people will see that yeah I am benefited because of Rohingya people here. I request international community to initiate sustainable intervention among host community sector by sector.'* (A senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner).

Whilst the above section has detailed the key challenges associated with the Rohingya crises, the following section includes an overview and comparison of the challenges faced in resolving the crises of the IDP's in Afghanistan.

### **6.3.2 Prospective ways forward for the displaced Rohingya refugees**

In section 6.2.2 the challenges faced in resolving the Rohingya crises were set out. Here we will look at sustainable solutions, and the options that were available in maintaining the Rohingyas dignity and providing a sustainable solution. Two of the most significant problems faced by Rohingya refugees in the camps were overcoming the economic and cultural challenges they currently faced whilst residing in Bangladesh. Their lack of rights within Bangladesh, prevented them from using their skills, knowledge, and abilities, which could have addressed some of the issues raised (lack of self-sufficiency and reliance upon aid).

*'We want both our men and women to be engaged in their respective professions. As a woman, if I had a sewing machine, I would've been able to earn a livelihood with it. And we wish the men could go out of the camp and start some small businesses or maybe could work as a porter in someone else's field. We used to do these types of work when we were in Burma.'* (B02, a 30-year-old female).

However, while being self-sufficient in Bangladesh would improve the Rohingyas situation it would not provide a long-term solution. In the long-term almost all Rohingya refugees want to return to their home in the Rakhine area of Myanmar.

*'If we go abroad, we will still become refugees. We are already refugees here in Cox's Bazar. We don't want to go to any other country. We just want to return to our homeland.'* (A 42-year-old Male, FGD 2)

However, they only want to return as full citizens of Myanmar and with their Rohingya and Islamic identity being recognised and respected. They fear that if they return without full citizenship they will continue to be violently attacked and possibly even deracinated again. Survey data is supported by qualitative storytelling interviews of the Rohingyas, illustrating the conditions they felt must be met to ensure their safety on their return: citizenship; recognition of Rohingya identity; education; freedom of movement; religious freedom; employment; safety and security. Some also wanted justice for past atrocities and many requested protection from an international force such as a UN peacekeeping mission.

*'First, Burmese [Myanmar] citizenship, second, our recognition as Rohingyas, third, justice for the rape of our mother and sisters, fourth, justice for the Rohingya mass killing and fifth, need for the UN protection security force'* (B31, a 34-year-old male).

Returning to Myanmar would also resolve the issues caused to the host community from the presence of a refugee camp housing almost a million people. Whilst this section has identified some of the significant challenges to resolving the Rohingya crises, it has also included an overview of some of the potential solutions from the perspectives of the Rohingya refugees. It has also included an overview of their views and feelings on three potential ways forward. The following section focuses upon the views and perspectives of humanitarian actors and government officials.

In addition to the Rohingyas, the humanitarian actors agreed that voluntary repatriation with full citizenship to the Rakhine area of Myanmar was the most desirable solution, it was the most acceptable sustainable and long-term solution to everyone except Myanmar.

Bangladeshi government officials agreed that the Rohingya should return to Myanmar and recognised the importance of their safety. However, they also recognised that there was insufficient consideration of the importance of their citizenship status within Myanmar. The Bangladesh Government felt that negotiating the Rohingyas citizenship status prior to their re-patriation would delay the voluntary repatriation and subject the Rohingyas to further risk. The Bangladeshi Government argued that they were unable to influence the Myanmar Government and secure the Rohingyas citizenship, which was deemed to be a separate issue between the Rohingyas and Myanmar government. However, it is unlikely that the Rohingya will voluntarily return to Myanmar unless they are awarded citizenship.

*'There are few differences between what we consider voluntary repatriation and that of some human rights agencies. We are saying that Rohingyas must go back voluntarily if Myanmar provides them safe place, opportunity of livelihood, health care and land.'*

*Unfortunately, despite taking any responsibilities of Rohingyas, some of the international organisations had made a longer list including rights to citizenship in Myanmar. Bangladesh cannot bring Myanmar's citizenship for them. It is between them and Myanmar' (An Adviser to the Prime Minister)*

Many of the humanitarian actors recognised the complexity of the Rohingyas return to Myanmar which evolved around the notion of identity, citizenship and the individual and collective safety and future sustainability of the Rohingyas. Some humanitarian actors and the Bangladesh Government noted that the international community needs to do more to resolve the Rohingya crises.

*'The International Community needs to keep the pressure up on the Government of Myanmar. They need to keep pushing the Rohingya agenda and they need to recognise Rohingya citizenship and their right to live as citizens in Rakhine, Myanmar. They are a community and a social group and they all need to be properly recognised and accepted as citizens' (A Senior Humanitarian Worker for the World Food Programme).*

*'Myanmar state authorities have resisted international sanctions and pressures for over three decades with the support of powerful regional players – China and India – that pretend to see the Rohingya issue as an internal matter of Myanmar.'* (A Senior official, UNHCR Office, Dhaka).

*'We appreciate the role of international community very much, but their roles are only limited to humanitarian support. It seems that the international community is not interested in the repatriation of the Rohingyas. The level of enthusiasm the IOM, UNFPA, and UNHCR show for humanitarian support it would have made a difference to the lives of Rohingyas if they showed similar interest towards the repatriation of the Rohingyas.'* (A State Minister, the Government of Bangladesh)

The Rohingya crises has lasted longer than anticipated, contributing to: overcrowding; tensions between the Rohingya refugees and host community; increased pressures on the country's resources; and slowed down Bangladesh's sustainable development. They feel that the situation cannot be sustained long-term.

*'Already there are so many demographic issues, there are structural issues, infrastructure issues, social issues and environmental issues, livelihood issues the people in Cox's Bazar are facing. I think it may create bigger problem for the entire region if we can't find a clear hope of repatriation'* (A former senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

If repatriation with citizenship is not possible some Rohingya may be permitted to settle permanently in Bangladesh and others could settle in other countries which already have a Rohingya population.

*'Now a good number of Rohingya people live in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India (in a small group) and Bangladesh. Again, some people in USA, UK, Canada, Australia not much but some people live there. So, I am not sure what will be the way, but it should be definitely considered.'* (A senior official of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner)

Furthermore, Williams et al (2021) proposed an alternative suggestion that is to create a new independent state in Rakhine. The creation of a separate state (devolution of powers) would offer the following:

1. permit Myanmar to retain its Buddhist state intact;
2. prevent their need to recognise the Muslim Rohingya;
3. allow the Rohingya to return as full citizens of Rakhine;
4. give all groups in Rakhine (Rohingya, Buddhist and others) equal citizenship, freedom of religion and other rights (Williams et al, 2021).

This solution requires the international community to accept its responsibility and invest several billions of dollars to set up Rakhine as a functioning democratic government with constitutional protections for all sections of society as a sustainable and permanent solution. A peace and reconciliation process would need to be a part of this solution as a restorative process, prior to making Rakhine a heavily devolved region of Myanmar with a separate government to manage its functions.

Negotiating long-term resolutions to the Rohingya crisis may take time, in the interim the present situation is causing problems for both the refugees and their host community. To relieve the pressure on the present camps the Bangladeshi government have proposed relocating about 100,000 refugees to Bhasan char, a remote hitherto uninhabited island off the Bangladesh coast where they will enjoy improved infrastructure such as real buildings to live in. The idea was initially rejected by the international community although very recently the UN has agreed to help the Government of Bangladesh relocate and support Rohingyas on the island. At the time of our research most Rohingyas were vehement that they did not want to move to the island because they were worried about the risk of tidal waves and cyclones. Many also feared that moving groups to different locations would reduce their social identity, something which had sustained them throughout very difficult times. Some however wanted to see the facilities first before making up their mind.

*'First we have to know where they want to take us. After visiting the place, on discussion we will consider whether to move.'* (B12, a 82 year old male)

## **6.4 Conclusion**

In both the medium and long-term plans for the Rohingya refugees there is a need to plan for the to become self-reliant. As with the IDPs this will require more sustainable development activities, creating income-generating opportunities for the Rohingya wherever they are. This will require income-generating opportunities, reskilling of workers and the building of the infrastructure: factories or other ways to provide new employment opportunities; roads; health clinics; shops; and, schools to educate the children and so ensure prosperity for future

generations of Rohingyas. If the Rohingya can prove to be a financial asset whilst they are refugees then Myanmar might be inclined to welcome them back as full citizens as they will enhance their sustainable development.

## **Chapter – 7: Conclusion and Recommendations**

## 7.1 Conclusion

The findings highlight what realistic changes will make a positive difference to leading safe and peaceful lives for IDPs in Afghanistan and forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who are living in Bangladesh. They clarify that all the members of each group needs to be treated with dignity, justice and equality and allowed and supported to move out of poverty and re-build (or build new) healthy lives in communities with other people, in the case of Rohingyas in communities with other Rohingyas. Clearly, this will have the potential to impact on and shape the way in which sustainable governance and sustainable human development are delivered in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Depending on the long-term solution chosen it may also impact on sustainable human development in the region more widely. A focus on dignity was chosen for this study because sustainable development requires just institutions, alleviating poverty, education etc. all of which are central to dignity, and because it captures, from the perspective of those in need, how they view a 'good' life or a positive and sustainable future, one in which their well-being is protected. Therefore, it is imperative to understand what the IDPs and the Rohingyas perceive as dignity (and loss of it) and how it underpins their calls for supporting their future. Tracking the experiences of the IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingyas from their homes in Rakhine, Myanmar to the camps in Bangladesh achieved a number of outcomes. It (1) delivered a clearer understanding of how displacements happen and are experienced; (2) created the knowledge necessary to improve the just and dignified delivery of support necessary to sustain displaced persons and their communities and potentially other displaced and refugee communities in the world; (3) explored practical solutions to provide pathways to healthier and safer lives (both short-term and more durable); and (4) highlighted the multidimensional support necessary to help the IDPs and Rohingyas to return to their places of origin, resettle elsewhere, or integrate into their host communities.

The research found that there were multiple reasons why IDPs had been displaced. Though most were displaced due to conflict and war, natural disaster and poverty accounted for some displacement. Most conflict induced IDPs experienced severe violence and traumatic events both before and during migration, and many are unable to return to their places of origin due to ongoing conflict, meaning that many had been displaced over a protracted period.

Rohingya refugees reported that in Myanmar they were deprived of a dignified life: they were denied freedom of religion; they had little freedom of movement; little access to education and no certification of education; rights to marry and register births were restricted; they could not have a walled gardens so protecting the dignity of women was restricted. Over many years the Rohingya people faced institutional 'racism' and discrimination which often surfaced as violence including sexual abuse, rape, torture, confiscation of land etc. In 2017 the attacks forced the Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. The 2017 'clearance operation' was systematic and orchestrated by the Myanmar military but local Buddhists ('Mogh') were also involved. The operation included mass murder and torture, targeted raids/attacks to Rohingya villages, burning whole villages, violence against women (including sexual violence and mutilation). They were chased down and attacked by the military and local Moghs all the way to the Bangladesh border, to make sure they left.

Interestingly, despite the extreme violence/conditions suffered by IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingya refugees quite a few stated that they had managed to preserve their dignity in spite

of the violence and poverty that they had suffered. It is likely that those who felt their dignity was preserved focused more on their inner dignity and that gave them resilience, whereas those who suffered a loss of dignity focused more on social dignity and felt degraded (Kateb, 2011). Apart from this inner sense of dignity which helped both the IDPs and Rohingyas to obtain a strong sense of communal identity and resilience, most participants acknowledged that their dignity was undermined due to their experience of violence and displacement. For the IDPs, *karāma* (dignity, honour, respect and high status in Arabic, cultural values: see Kandiwall, 2019), *ghairat* (zeal) *nang -wa-namos* (protection of family – especially women - and its property) or *izzat -wa- abro* (respect, prestige, status) were particularly badly affected. Whereas most Rohingyas reported feelings of total loss of dignity along with loss of everything else – life, liberty, control over sexual acts, property, land.

The main focus of this study is to understand how the IDPs in Afghanistan and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh conceptualise dignity through their lived experiences. The traditional top-down conceptualisation of dignity (Patrick and Simpson, 2019) often ignores the importance, experience and perception of dignity (and loss of it) from the perspective of the ‘victim’ group. This study avoided that and offers important critical insight in realising how the displaced view a good and dignified life for a positive future in which their wellbeing needs to be protected.

Drawing on their lived experiences in displacement and experiencing violence along the way, the IDPs and the Rohingyas conceptualised dignity in multiple different ways. For example, the IDPs delineated dignity specifically in terms of:

- access to their basic needs (such as food, water, and shelter);
- prosperity and wealth;
- self-reliance and self-sufficiency;
- protection of their lives, homes, and families;
- peace, safety and security;
- freedom and rights;
- mutual respect and compassion;
- religion and Islamic values; and
- education

The displaced Rohingya refugees in Bangladeshi camps had a similar complex conception of dignity, they described dignity in terms of:

- Safety
- Identity
- Religion
- Knowledge, education (ilm)
- Wealth, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency
- Solidarity and mutual respect

We contend that the IDPs’ and Rohingya conception of dignity was clearly shaped by the violence and/or persecution they suffered over an extended period while living in their homes. Their views are also influenced by the patriarchal values of Afghan and Rohingya culture. This report shows that there are some common features of dignity among the IDPs and Rohingya perception of dignity, namely:



- Safety, and protection from violence and sexual abuse
- Compassion, solidarity, and mutual respect
- Religious and cultural values
- Wealth, prosperity and self-reliance
- Knowledge and education (Ilm)

In addition to the commonalities evident in both the IDPs and Rohingya conceptualisation of dignity, this study also identified contextual differences in understanding how the IDPs and Rohingyas perceive and describe dignity. These include peace and security; identity, freedom and rights; and shelter, food and basic needs (see Chapter-4, for more details).

The evidence provided in this study builds on the emerging literature that explains dignity in displacement (see Holloway and Fan, 2018; Kandiwal, 2019). While some aspects such as social; religious; and economic dimensions of dignity (see Holloway and Fan, 2018) can be useful, evidence of this study demonstrate that one's safety (including protection from sexual violence), identity, desire to live a peaceful life; aspiration to achieve knowledge and education, requirement of a decent home and other basic needs, and freedom/human rights can also form key components of dignity in a given context as perceived through their lived experiences.

In contrast, humanitarian actors and senior government staff mainly conceptualised dignity in terms of respect and human rights and gave less emphasis to the roles of education, independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency in protecting and restoring the dignity of the IDPs and the Rohingyas. These differences may be explained by the reliance of humanitarian workers on traditional top-down conceptualisation of dignity (Patrick and Simpson, 2019) rather than gathering or reporting on the affected communities' lived experiences or their views and perspectives on dignity (Grandi, Mansour and Holloway, 2018). Clearly, the IDPs and Rohingyas drew on their lived experiences, and community and cultural perspectives of dignity, and this difference in perspective impacted on humanitarian support for the IDPs and Rohingyas.

In terms of the aid received by IDPs, the majority of IDPs were not satisfied with the humanitarian assistance provided, often describing the aid received as inadequate, insufficient, and inconsistent with their real needs. They reported that not all IDPs who are entitled to receive aid do so, and some vulnerable groups such as disabled people, widows, and the very poor and needy miss out on aid. In addition, many IDPs felt that their dignity was not protected when they were receiving aid, mainly due to chaotic procedures, lack of concern for their culture, religion and values, abuse and mistreatment by staff, and corruption in the distribution of aid. IDPs who felt that their dignity had been harmed were reluctant to complain or to report abuse using a formal complaints mechanism, as in many cases they feared what might happen.

For the displaced Rohingyas refugees in Bangladeshi camps, the humanitarian actors focused on the provision of necessities such as food, water, shelter, sanitation, and hygiene. The humanitarian actors felt their support met the most basic needs of the Rohingyas and humanitarian workers were largely polite and respectful towards the Rohingyas. Some humanitarian workers tried whenever possible to use the Rohingya language, exchanging respectful greetings and listen to individuals in order to show that they valued the Rohingya

people. These ways of working were particularly important if aid workers wanted to persuade the Rohingyas that something like modern medical treatment or using proper hygiene for menstrual cloths in the camps was of value to their well-being (Farzana, 2017). It was also very important if trying to persuade particularly vulnerable individuals that they should seek support (Akhter and Kusakabe, 2014). However, they recognised that there was room for improvement and strove to deliver it, for example, the WFP increased the food options from 3 to 19 but they also thought that overall, they were covering what needed to be provided. Some international and local NGOs recognised that education was important to the Rohingyas, they also recognised its importance to sustainable development and so some have worked hard to find ways to improve the education provided to Rohingya children and to draw the issue to the attention of the Bangladeshi authorities in order to try to find a solution (Human Rights Watch, 2019). There was another concern the humanitarian actors felt the Rohingya might face, something that might cause a diminution in the way in which they were treated. It was feared that in time there would be aid fatigue on the part of international funders which would risk a significant reduction in the services delivered. They therefore recognised the increasingly precarious situation the Rohingyas were in, particularly if their ability to earn cash money continued to be curtailed.

As conflict and war was identified as the main reasons for the internal displacement in Afghanistan, understandably peacebuilding was recognised as a main challenge towards a dignified solution for the IDPs. That peace is elusive and whilst humanitarian provision tries to support IDP, overall, much more needs to be done to develop durable and sustainable solutions for the many problems and challenges experienced by IDPs in Afghanistan. IDPs have called for development support in the following ten areas:

- (1) the provision of land and sustainable shelter, including access to water, sanitation and energy (SDG Goals 1.4, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 11.1, 11.3);
- (2) construction of clinics, schools, and capacity building centres (SDG Goals 1.4, 3.8, 4.a, 7.1, 9.1, 11);
- (3) construction of roads, factories, and power stations (SDG Goals 7.1, 9);
- (4) restoration of houses, roads, land, drinking water and sanitation (SDG Goals 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 9.1, 11.2);
- (5) agricultural assistance (SDG Goals 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 2.a, 9.3);
- (6) education for children (SDG Goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7);
- (7) the provision of employment opportunities (SDG Goals 2.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5);
- (8) capital for business investment (SDG Goals 8, 9.2, 9.3);
- (9) skills development and training (SDG Goals 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.5); and
- (10) peacebuilding and provision of safe and secure environments (SDG Goals 5.5, 11.1, the whole of goal 16 but in particular 16.1, 16.2, 16.3)

In the context of displaced Rohingya refugees, the continuity of the crisis without a safe and dignified solution on the horizon seem to have caused major frustrations for the Rohingyas, the Government of Bangladesh and some humanitarian actors. The current situation is problematic because:

- it is encouraging a dependency culture which the Rohingyas feel undermines their dignity, they want to be self-sufficient;

- the host community feel unjustly treated;
- the pressures on the local environment, and wildlife are vast and could have far-reaching consequences;
- funding to support on-going aid and improve services is dwindling.

All of these mean that a more permanent and long-term solution is necessary. All parties – the Rohingya, the Bangladesh Government, the aid agencies, and the international community – agree that the permanent resolution of the problem would be the voluntary return of the Rohingya to their homelands in Rakhine, Myanmar, as full citizens of Myanmar. The only real opposition to this comes from within Myanmar.

The Rohingyas have called for development support in the following areas:

11. the provision of land in Rakhine and of sustainable shelter, including access to water, sanitation and energy so they can re-build their communities (SDG Goals 1.4, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 11.1, 11.3);
12. construction of clinics (or access to already existing clinics), schools, and capacity building centres (SDG Goals 1.4, 3.8, 4.a, 7.1, 9.1, 11);
13. construction of destroyed infrastructure and that necessary to building sustainable lives in Rakhine, Myanmar, such as roads, factories, and power stations (SDG Goals 7.1, 9);
14. restoration of houses, roads (where necessary and/or where destroyed), land, drinking water and sanitation (SDG Goals 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 9.1, 11.2);
15. agricultural assistance (SDG Goals 1.4, 2.3, 2.4, 2.a, 9.3);
16. education for children (SDG Goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7);
17. the provision of employment opportunities (SDG Goals 2.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5);
18. capital for business investment (in farms, shops and other traditional businesses as well as possibly in new business ventures) (SDG Goals 8, 9.2, 9.3);
19. skills development and training (for traditional and new employment) so they are able to take up the employment opportunities (SDG Goals 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 5.5); and
20. peacebuilding and provision of safe and secure environments in Rakhine (SDG Goals 5.5, 11.1, the whole of goal 16 but in particular 16.1, 16.2, 16.3)

## **7.2 Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

As manifested in this study, the IDPs in Afghanistan and the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, based on their lived experience, were capable of identifying the main challenges and prospective ways forward. Based on their views, we recommend the following for policy practices.

For the IDPs in Afghanistan,

- Rather than relying on top-down conceptualisations of dignity, humanitarian actors should seek to understand what dignity means to the affected communities and how to uphold IDPs dignity based on the views and perspectives of IDPs themselves.
- Humanitarian organisations must aim for a more timely and consistent response to conflict, drought, and other natural disasters in Afghanistan, with more frequent assistance and enough aid to at least fulfil each families' basic daily requirements.
- Humanitarian and government organisations should focus on sustainable development activities and creating income-generating opportunities in rural drought-affected areas and poverty-stricken areas in order to prevent people from migrating from these areas in the first place.
- In terms of the provision of education, particular attention should be paid to education for girls, who face additional cultural barriers in accessing educational facilities.
- Particular attention should be paid to providing a greater level of psychosocial support for IDPs, particularly those affected by conflict, war and violence, including children.
- Humanitarian workers should ensure that vulnerable groups such as widows are able to receive aid safely, taking into account cultural norms and practices and recognising that single women may be at risk of gender-based violence, sexual violence, discrimination or persecution if required to leave their homes alone.
- Overall, Afghanistan needs to be at peace, without wars and conflicts.

For the forcibly displaced Rohingya refugees who are currently living in Bangladesh, we recommend the following:

- Rather than relying on top-down conceptualisations of dignity, humanitarian actors should seek to understand what dignity means to the affected communities and how to uphold the Dignity of the Rohingya people based on the views and perspectives of the Rohingya themselves.
- There is an immediate need to improve the provision of education and of educational certificates. Education should be provided equally to boys and girls.
- Employment opportunities need to be increased now, even whilst the Rohingya are living in the camps. It is only in this way that they will be able to become self-sufficient, something which is core to their *maan-shomman* [honour and status].
- Within the camps, women and girls should also be supported to work outside the home if that is what they choose and if it will increase their feelings of self-worth and dignity. Not only should opportunities be designed in prestigious industries for women (some, though not all, might be in women only work environments) but also cultural education should take place to show why this is important and why Rohingya women should be free to work outside the home. This is particularly necessary at the moment as so many of the Rohingya live in women headed households.
- There needs to be greater access to employment now to provide greater access to cash so the lives of the Rohingya will be enriched as they will be able to choose which food and other products they buy.
- Particular attention should be paid to providing a greater level of psychosocial support for Rohingya refugees all of whom have been affected by violence and degradation. There

needs to be specialist provision for children and greater specialist provision for women, particularly those whose life has been attacked by being raped or sexually attacked.

- Humanitarian workers and the government representatives working in the Cox's Bazar area should ensure that vulnerable groups such as women and children do not fall prey to offenders who sexually abuse and/or traffic them.
- Sanitation needs to be improved in the camps to ensure that even during the monsoon there is not open sewage in the camps.
- In the longer term the Rohingya need to be awarded citizenship and full rights, preferably in the Rakhine region of Myanmar though if that does not prove possible then in other states.
- Wherever they find a permanent home they need:
  - to be citizens
  - their peace and security to be guaranteed by means of a peace-keeping force if necessary;
  - a peace and reconciliation type restorative process;
  - everything necessary to a sustainable future.

Finally, and in appreciation of what the Bangladesh Government and people have done in hosting the Rohingya there needs to be aid for sustainable development of the host community in Cox's Bazar to ensure that they do not suffer long-term and to ensure that the sustainable development of Bangladesh is not negatively impacted in the long-term.

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