

the government. The unregistered refugees in Categories B and C did not receive food assistance from international agencies. While both groups were left to fend for themselves, Categories B and C survived under very different circumstances, leading to contrasting outcomes.

The key determinants of the outcomes in terms of food security and dietary diversity were the economic activities and relationships that were feasible for these different groups of refugees.

Not surprisingly, registered refugees (Category A) had greater diversity in their food items compared to the unregistered ones in the makeshift sites (Category B), who had higher malnutrition rates. "Food assistance contributed directly to this dietary diversity, because rations could be sold, shared or exchanged" and also used for obtaining loans to buy other food items (WFP & UNHCR 2012: xix).

The unregistered Rohingyas in the makeshift campsites (Category B) were the most food-insecure and the most vulnerable in terms of protection risks among all refugee groups (WFP & UNHCR 2012: xxi). Their high concentration in a small area, where they outnumbered the local population and contributed to the degradation of common resources through deforestation,

overfishing, and pollution of water sources resulted in their lack of protection and food security.

It is striking that the unregistered refugees who had assimilated with local communities (Category C) had more diversified diets compared to even the registered refugees

Rohingya refugees were not legally allowed to engage in economic activities in Bangladesh and those living in official camps were not formally permitted to leave and travel without permission. Such restrictions left them with little choice but to break the law and pursue "illegal" options for pursuing food security and long term livelihood opportunities.

Attempts by the refugees to ensure their own food security have been facilitated by their skillful use of ties of kinship, community and patronage.

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receiving official food rations (Category A) (WFP & UNHCR 2012: xviii-xix). Moreover, "Almost twice as many Rohingyas living in local communities had four or more food groups in their diets than did unregistered Rohingyas in makeshift sites" (Category B) (WFP & UNHCR 2012: xviii). This suggests that refugees branching out on their own and finding avenues of survival in the local economy and society had been able to access better food security and informal protection systems compared to those living in the official camps and makeshift sites. Despite having no legal status in Bangladesh, they (Category C) came "closest to the goal of self-reliance", displaying greater range of livelihood strategies and spatial movements among all refugee groups. Such self-created food security attained by refugees assimilating with local communities is suggestive of a different formulation of food sovereignty that is more appropriate to the circumstances faced by such marginal groups without land and citizenship.

Rohingya refugees were not legally allowed to engage in economic activities in Bangladesh and those living in official camps were not formally permitted to leave and travel without permission. Such restrictions left them with little choice but to break the law and pursue "illegal" options for pursuing food security and long term livelihood opportunities. While such strategies have enabled the refugees to access food by earning from the local economy, they have been necessarily exposed to a whole range of protection risks from law enforcing agencies, local powerholders and criminal elements.

Attempts by the refugees to ensure their own food security have been facilitated by their skillful use of ties of kinship, community and patronage. Rohingyas who had marriage ties with Bangladeshi families received food, shelter and physical protection from their relatives, as well as help in finding employment. Established Rohingya refugees who had arrived earlier provided similar help to new arrivals from Myanmar, indicative of processes of "migrant community formation" and chain migration. Furthermore, Rohingyas entered into clientelist relationships with local powerholders, elite groups, community leaders and other gatekeepers, enabling them to earn and receive protection against possible deportation. Not least, the refugees made themselves indispensable in the local labour market, while also becoming unintended recruits or victims of trafficking networks. These varied roles of the Rohingyas activated powerful political and economic interests favouring their continued entry and residence in Bangladesh.

Given the lack of food rations and formal

protection from the state, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have attempted to ensure their livelihoods and food security through a number of strategies. They have accepted low wages and returns to make their presence profitable to their employers, land owners and patrons. At the same time they have become clients of local powerholders for protection. They have got themselves enrolled in the voting lists to gain formal documentation of their right to stay in Bangladesh. They have spread out from the Cox's Bazar area adjoining the Burmese border to more distant and safer parts of Bangladesh where they can assimilate into the population without being conspicuously bracketed as foreign refugees.

While such strategies have worked up to a point, these have been constrained by the systematic exclusion of the Rohingyas from the electoral roll during 2007-09 and the growth of resentment against them among local groups threatened by their competition in the form of lower wages and cheaper goods and services. Given limited stocks of farming lands, fishing areas and forests, the Rohingyas have also competed with the local population for access to these scarce natural resources. The combination of these multiple factors unavoidably triggered social and economic conflicts and political opposition to the refugees among affected sections of the local population. Anti-Rohingya movements during 2010 have specifically targeted those economic activities and assets that have provided them with food security and protection from deportation, calling for the cancellation of their access to land and the labour market.

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