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Unprotected and Uncared: What is next for Rohingya Children?

Abstract

Forced migration and the resulting refugee movement for a secure shelter have become a matter of grave concern in recent days throughout the planet. The children are always the most innocent and feeble prey of such situations. For the last few months Rohingyas, mainly a Muslim ethnic minority group from the Northern Rakhine State of Western Myanmar, have occupied a central place in the editorials, news of TV Channels, gossip of social media and discussions of civil society. It has become a debatable issue. The emergence and attack of Rohingya insurgents and the counter hit by the Burmese military has turned the total situation a volcanic one since August 2017. Involvement of a section of this population with Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has curved the Rohingya issue more complicated. On the one hand the plight of Rohingyas is beyond any description and on the other hand they are being labelled as “terrorist”. The Rohingyas remain as an excluded category in the land of Myanmar where they are living for generations. They have become a group of stateless population from 1982 according to The Myanmar Citizenship Law that denies to include Rohingyas among the 135 national ethnic groups of the State. Rohingyas are facing discrimination and persecution in the hand of Burmese Government since the country's independence and the loss of nationality has made them extremely vulnerable to any shorts of maltreatment. Their existence is marked as an illegal one within and outside Myanmar. Constraint on every indispensable arena of life including religious practices forces them to migrate in neighbouring countries for a considerable period of time. A continuous setting of violence persists in Arakan since 2012 riot and the massacre of 2017 has contributed to produce such abrasion that

will remain irreparable for years. Victimization of Rohingya children is not a new event but the chaos of 2017 has placed children in certain hitches that are really difficult to address. The present paper is going to highlight the unfortunate misery of Rohingya children in different circumstances mainly since and from 2012 to till now.

Keywords: Rohingya Muslim, Children, Myanmar, Rakhine, Persecution, Forced Migration, Refugee, ARSA, Ethnic Group, Stateless.

Section-I

In September 2015 the photograph of a drowned Syrian baby boy, Aylan Kurdi on a beach in Turkey has shaken the world for a while [Picture: 1]. The boy died along with his mother and his brother in their desperate challenge to reach Canada. International rage over the refugee crisis has sparked since the appearance of the images of Aylan¹. Just one year after again a recurring picture of a dead child has become viral on social media. This time it is a Rohingya child from Myanmar [Picture:2]. Since August 2017 there is no dearth of news regarding the unlucky death of Rohingyas because of the drowning of overloaded boats and discovery of their dead bodies in the Naff River along with the adjacent sea. A large section of this ill-fated population is the Rohingya children². Visit to camps in Kutupalong , Cox Bazaar by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh and her emotional outburst at the sight of Rohingya children's suffering have also engrossed the concentration of the world towards the crisis of Rohingyas³. Children have always been the most innocent victim of conflict, war and displacement and there is always a difficulty to track them and bring them under care and support. The Rohingya children are not an exception of that. Though the crisis of this population has gained publicity in recent times but their disaster is not at all a new one.

The Rohingyas, mainly a Muslim ethnic minority from Northern Rakhine⁴ (previously known as Arakan State) state of Western Myanmar⁵, are the victims of repeated waves of discrimination, persecution and dislocation. The presence of Rohingyas in Arakan can be traced back since 10th Century (Bhaumik, 2013). In Myanmar lots of controversy is associated with the term “Rohingya” itself. However it becomes evident that the term has spread more extensively in current times since the 1990s. Though the community is designated internationally as well as by themselves as “Rohingya” but they are formally identified “as illegal Bengali migrants from neighboring Bangladesh” by the Myanmar government. It is also the common perception of the Myanmar people regarding Rohingyas (Leider 2014 & Kipgen 2014).

Leider mentions Lewa and Selth who do not leave any doubt regarding “the ethnic roots of the Rohingyas”. At the *Canadian Friends of Burma Public Conference* in 2002 Chris Lewa presented a report that “the Rohingya Muslims are ethnically and religiously related to the Chittagonians of southern Bangladesh”. The term “Rohingya” was used by Andrew Selth in 2003 in his paper on Myanmar’s Muslims to denote the “largest Muslim community in Burma today”. An obvious and clear-cut historical definition was offered by him: “These are Bengali Muslims who live in Arakan State... most Rohingyas arrived with the British colonialists in the 19th and 20th centuries” (Leider, 2014).

Geographically Arakan of Myanmar and the South eastern part of Bangladesh are the two sides of the river Naff. “Akyab in Myanmar is on the left bank and Teknaf Upazila of Cox’s Bazar district of Bangladesh is on the right bank of the river” (Ullah, 2011). The language of Rohingyas is also related to the Bengali people of Chittagong. During colonial period there was no restriction of movement between these two regions. But the increasing capture of productive lands by the Muslim cultivators from Eastern Bengal caused much antipathy amongst the Buddhists of Rakhine. The first riot between two communities took place on 28 March 1942. At the time of Second World War the faithful Rohingyas sided with British colonial rulers and the Arakanese supported the

Japanese (Bhaumik, 2013). Conflict and hostile relationship between Buddhist and Rohingya Muslims in Arakan have taken place ever since.

After independence in 1948 Rohingyas are systematically deprived and persecuted by the Burmese Government. The political, social and economic system is designed in such fashion that can easily show prejudice against this minority. The bigoted laws and policies along with some violent events of 1978, 1991-92, 2001, 2009, 2012 and finally 2017 are the outcome of the system of discrimination put by Myanmar against Rohingyas. The system's anchor is the 1982 citizenship law that denies the nationality right of the Rohingya population. The Rohingyas are excluded from the list of 135 national ethnic groups and become stateless by virtue of this law. The lack of legal accountability justifies all the discriminatory policy of Myanmar government towards Rohingyas and makes them more vulnerable to all sorts of maltreatment as well as persecution (Zawacki, 2013). Though Rohingyas are forced to leave their land each and every day to escape inhuman living conditions but some years like 1978, 1991-92, 2012 and finally in 2017 are finally remarkable for severe breach of human rights and colossal displacement of Rohingya community from Arakan.

The number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh has augmented since violence in June 2012 between Muslim Rohingya and Rakhine Buddhists in Arakan State. Consequently some of the 140,000 internally displaced Rohingyas endeavour to run away across the border. In spite of the government's declaration that it has taken the essential steps to prevent the frequent bloodshed, fierce clash breaks out once more on 21 October (hrw.org, 22 April, 2013)⁶. Onwards 2012 there is incessant occurrence of violence and a steady flow of Rohingyas from Myanmar to Bangladesh and other adjacent countries has started to take place. As India is the other option for many of them so a section of uprooted Rohingyas is also moving towards Indian mainly after 2012. The influx of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh has reached astounding magnitude since August 2017 "*dominating the headlines amid international outcry*". It has become the "*world's fastest-growing*

refugee crisis”. On November 17, 2017 the influx of displaced Rohingyas numbers 620,000 in Bangladesh (unhcr.org, December1, 2017)⁷.

Forced labour without any payment, constraint on free movement, restriction on all basic requirements of life, like family, marriage, children, choice of occupation along with religious harassment, are the daily life of Rohingyas in Arakan. Rape and other form of sexual violence against Rohingya women force the population to seek shelter in nearby countries. In the last few decades Rohingyas spread in different territories of South and Southeast Asia and even beyond to avoid their oppression at the hands of Burmese military along with local Buddhist Moughs (Lewa,2009 and Imran & Mian,2014).

In this total mishap Rohingyas children are “trapped in limbo”⁸. Their deprivation and persecution start since they are at their mother’s womb. Born as a stateless one they are, by default, out of any protection and many a time their parents fail to save them from disaster, the regular upshot of Rohingyas in Arakan. Torture and murder of parents, loss and separation from them in course of migration and after are the most familiar life experiences of Rohingya children. They are getting lost each and every day. This present study has tried to show the victimization and misfortune of Rohingya children in different context. The study is mainly based on secondary sources of data that utilizes other research papers, online pages of newspapers, different online news sources including social media and reports of different organizations. In addition with these some experience and interaction of the researcher with this population are also used in the study.

Section-II

The devastating consequences of continuous maltreatment and the resulting dislocation affect not only the Rohingya community but also the bordering lands as well particularly Bangladesh. The

agony of children is beyond any description and the complications after 2017 has left Rohingya children amidst extreme uncertainty and difficulty.

Hounding of Rohingya Children in Rakhine, Myanmar

Though the issue has attracted the attention of the world in recent past but persecution against Rohingyas is a natural happening in Arakan and the oppression of children is a common phenomena. Majumder (2015) in her study mentions that from 2007 Rohingyas are not entitled to take more than 2 children and they are forced to sign an agreement on this condition before marriage. Any breach of the conformity results in penalty. Rape has been used as a very successful weapon against Rohingyas for years. Pregnant women are also becoming the prey of sexual exploitation and rape. Many a time they are beaten harshly. “*Pregnant women, who are very near to delivery, are attacked by swords. Their baby is taken out from their womb and thrown away. This is the most extreme and brutal form of violence, not only against women but also against humanity. At least 10 respondents (both men & women) tell about this violence. Some are the eye witness of this brutality*” (Majumder, 2015).

In course of their visit to the makeshift camps of Bangladesh since August 2017 Restless Beings are informed that “*20.83% directly saw girls get kidnapped, raped or targeted because they were pregnant*” (The Genocide of the Ignored Rohingya, 2018)⁹. As pregnant women are murdered in hospitals they cannot opt for institutional delivery. “*Rakhine extremist doctors and nurses killed a pregnant Rohingya woman during her delivery in the Sittwe General Hospital yesterday, according to the reliable sources*” (January 8, 2015; rvisiontv.com).¹⁰

To enrol the name of new born baby in the family book which is the only identity of Rohingyas in Myanmar 7000 to 8000 Kyat is demanded from the family. The amount is not same in all the time and for all. In the riot of 2012 children are killed pitilessly, they are burnt alive and thrown away from the hills (Majumder, 2015). *In course of my interaction with Rohingyas in 2015 I was*

informed by one young woman that in the conflict of 2012 Myanmar military placed many Rohingya children upon iron net and under the net they arranged fire. Literally children are just roasted like chicken. A report by UNICEF in 2018 also mentions the incidents of merciless killing of Rohingya children. Military killed the eldest child, who was a seven-year-old boy of 19-year-old Aisha, as the family attempted to escape the violence of 2017. “*They threw my son in the air and cut him with a machete. Then they threw petrol bombs and burned down our houses.*”--- Aisha, victim of 2017 massacre (UNICEF CHILD ALERT February 2018)¹¹. So whether it is 2017 or 2012 the situation is characterised by the same kind of sadistic events.

Suffering and Victimization in Bangladesh

After the attack of Rohingya insurgents on security officers in last August (2017) Myanmar military has burnt villages after villages. Though the natural instinct to be alive urges even the full term pregnant woman to escape the confirm death but they can't avoid the labour pain. Rohingya children were born in course of migration under the open sky devoid of any required facility for child birth. Even they were deprived of the minimum care from the family members. *Nur Bibi who took shelter upon the Balkhali Mountain in Cox Bazaar has delivered her first child, an innocent baby girl, on the 13th Day after her coming in Bangladesh*¹².

In the last nine months more than 1600 Rohingya babies have taken birth either in the refugee camps or in the casual settlements in Cox Bazaar, the land of Bangladesh (UNICEF, 17 May 2018)¹³. A large section of Rohingya women who take shelter in Bangladesh in the last few months are rape victims. It is known from the local doctors that these women cannot take treatment out of shame. There is always a risk of pregnancy in such cases. Medicines were desperately needed to escape this misfortune but they failed to avail it due to several reasons under most unfavourable situations.¹⁴

“Around 60 babies a day are taking their first breath in appalling conditions, away from home, to mothers who have survived displacement, violence, trauma and, at times, rape,” --- Edouard Beigbeder, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh. *“It is impossible to know the true number of babies who have been or will be born as a result of sexual violence,”* added Mr Beigbeder. *“But it is vital that each and every new and expectant mother and every new-born receive all the help and support they need.”*¹⁵ It is expected that *“Tens of thousands of pregnant Rohingya women, many of whom are believed to be victims of rape”*, are going *“to give birth in the coming weeks in squalid refugee camps in Bangladesh”* (CTV News, May 21, 2018)¹⁶.

Actually May 2018 is the ninth month since that mass departure started. The unwanted pregnancy as a result of sexual violence committed by Myanmar military has completed or going to be finished its term. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) that runs hospitals in the extensive Cox’s Bazaar camps is preparing to counsel victimized mothers. Many of these mothers are as young as below 18. The fear of social reaction is an additional stress for them. These children are taking birth with a stigma and it is really doubtful that how far they will be acceptable by the other members of the community. But at the same time it is not a new-fangled experience. Just before one year a Rohingya woman missed her period after getting raped by three Burmese soldiers in Maungdaw town. In the knowledge of Ko Ko Linn, a Rohingya political activist in Bangladesh, there are 15 cases of women who have conceived as a result of sexual assault by Myanmar soldiers in August 2017. But he is sure that a huge number of such cases are undocumented. In opinion of Linn children are born or going to be born in such cases, should not countenance stigma. *“They will be given birth by a Rohingya mother who held them for up to 10 months, bearing all sorts of pain and hurt,”* he says. *“Therefore, they are sons and daughters of Rohingya.”*¹⁷

Acceptance and rejection go hand by hand in case of Rohingya children who are carried by their rape victim mothers. Fatima a Rohingya woman of 25 *“was gang-raped by a half-dozen soldiers last June in Maungdaw district, at a time when her husband, Mohammad Hussein, had fled the*

*village to escape arrest. Reunited four months later in the Kutupalong refugee camp, Hussein saw she was pregnant". However the baby girl was accepted by Hussein who is not her biological father. "If we had not had this baby," Hussein smiled, "we wouldn't have experienced this joy."*¹⁸

But being a widow Uma Suleiman is not in a position to accept the one who is growing mature day by day in her womb. *At the age of 30 she is a mother of five children. Her eldest daughter is already married at 16. Her older children are obdurate to accept the baby in their mother's womb. The coming one can never be the one of them. Suleiman is also determined to declare that "I didn't want this baby," because she believes that recognizing this one means to accept what happened to her and to take it as normal.*¹⁹

Sometimes it is also difficult for mothers to identify the biological father of their child. *Fatema, a Rohingya refugee of 16 cannot be sure about the father of the baby whom she is carrying now. She was raped after her husband's murder.* In an interview she has told that "If it is from my husband then it will have his features; if it is from someone else, it will have theirs" but "He is my baby and I will have to love him."²⁰ There is no doubt that women bear the pain of rape but victimization is not limited to them only. Rape is such an incident that affects the entire population in general and the children born out of this chaos in particular.

"When hundreds of thousands of terrified Rohingya refugees began flooding onto the beaches and paddy fields of southern Bangladesh six months ago, it was the children-who made up nearly sixty percent of their number-that caught many people's attention"(UNICEF CHILD ALERT February 2018)²¹. In Sept 2017 UNICEF has stated that near about 1300 Rohingya children have entered BD without parents or any relative to escape violence. It is guessed that Myanmar military has killed either both the parents or the fathers of these children. However these children are accompanied by some Rohingya family while coming to Bangladesh. UNICEF is trying to assist them so that they can overcome the trauma and has placed them in those families with whom the children are

identified to come. From different estimation both national and international the number of new coming Rohingya children in that phase of time is more than 2 lakh and half of them have lost their father (approximately). 40% children are without guardian and some are accompanied only either by mother or by grandmother. Many Rohingya women have informed that they do not find the family members of many such children whom they have taken with them in Bangladesh. The children who have come without family with others are many a time only 3/ 4 years old. So it is not possible to know what happened to their unfortunate parents (BBC Bengali, Sep 17, 2017)²².

The Founder/Co-Director of Restless beings (www.restlessbeings.org)²³ shared a story of a Rohingya boy in her face book wall (<https://www.facebook.com/RahimaShroom>) on 29 May 2018.

The boy Abu of 10 along with his sister Shorifa of 5 now is living in “tarpaulin shelter with a family that once lived in his village but they don't have enough food from the aid so often Abu and his sister eat very little - just one small bowl of rice and lentils a day or just boiled rice with salt”. Their mother and elder brother were murdered and they failed to find out their father before leaving Burma in 2017.

There is every possibility that different criminal groups and traffickers can take the advantage of this helpless condition of Rohingya children and can involve this vulnerable section in any kind of immoral affairs. Restless Beings in their report (2018) mentions that “50% of the children interviewees stated a fear of being kidnapped by traffickers ...” and “8.3% of all respondents said they had been approached by traffickers to move to other parts of the country or to other states”²⁴.

Very recently a shocking news in dhakatribune.com and also in some news paper of Bangladesh reveals the abuse of Rohingya children by drug peddling rackets. “Md Afsar, a Rohingya child, was asked to swallow a small capsule-like bundle containing 50-60 yaba tablets. The 12-year old swallowed around 30 bundles and carried the contraband drugs in his stomach during his journey from Teknaf to Dhaka. During the trip he was not allowed to eat anything. Upon reaching Dhaka,

he was given a medicine and the bundles of yaba pills came out of his rectum with his stools. The yaba was then sold to drug dealers.”²⁵

Taking birth without identity, love, care and support, passing the entire childhood with trauma, uncertainty and harshness, becoming involved with immoral activities unknowingly Rohingya children are lingering at the edge of their existence. They are deprived even of the three basic necessities of life---food, clothing and shelter.

Prolongation of Unfair Treatment and Misfortune in India

Though Rohingyas are entering in India for a long period of time but the matter has gained considerable attention only for 10 to 11 months. The choice of the Central Government of India to deport Rohingyas brings the issue in the forefront of interest. The Government has clarified its position regarding Rohingyas through its affidavit in the Supreme Court on 19 September 2017. It is clearly stated that the Rohingyas who are living in India have a connection with the terrorist organizations of Pakistan. It is a risk to the security of our country. The government also informed the Supreme Court that some Rohingya Muslims with militant background, have already become active in places like Jammu, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mewat, and they are a potential threat to internal security of the country (anandabazar.com, 19 September 2017)²⁶.

As a response West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights has filed a petition in Supreme Court of India to defend the 44 Rohingya Children who are under the custody of the State. The Chairperson of the Commission has told BBC that they cannot return the innocent children from West Bengal to “*the death valley of Myanmar*”. She adds that “*The World knows what is going on in Myanmar*”. The Central Government wishes to deport Rohingyas on the assumption that they can hurt the national security but the Commission’s point is that “*the children are not terrorists and they cannot harm the national security*”. There are 24 Rohingya children in different

shelter homes of West Bengal and some 20 children are locked up in jails of the state with their mothers. They are detained for their illegal entry in Indian Territory (BBC Bengali, Fri Sep 22, 2017)²⁷.

In Indian land Rohingya children are also facing the problem of identity along with the experience of separation from their parents and imprisonment which is the gloomiest fate of these innocent kids. *Ayesha Bibi, an illiterate Rohingya mother of 22 whom I met in April 2015 in Damdam Central Correctional Home²⁸ migrated long ago from Burma and availed refugee status in Bangladesh. She got married and became a mother of three children in the Kutupalong Camp. But these children neither had any birth proof nor had refugee status in Bangladesh. So she along with her husband and children came to India. All of them were imprisoned for 6 months as Under Trial when I came in touch with them*²⁹. In such cases the question automatically comes in front that who are these children? Their parents were born in the land of Burma but spent all the important stages of life in Bangladesh. Though their mother became able to gain the refugee status in Bangladesh but they lack any documentation of their birth. Now they are in a prison of another country namely India. So what is/will be their identity. Being a Rohingya only means a status less, excluded category of people. This identity is unable to give them any legal security in any land of the world. They are in true sense “no body’s people in a no-man’s land.”³⁰

In case of incarceration children are either confined in prisons with their mothers/parents or they are sent to Children’s Homes in West Bengal. This is because children above six years are not allowed in prisons of the state. And in this way Rohingya children are getting separated from their parents. Maitra (2017) in her paper ‘ “Bari Jabo Kobe?” Plight of a Homeless Young Rohingya’ highlights the separation of families in course of migration. *She presents a case study of a Rohingya girl named Safi who is from Harifara village of Arakan, Myanmar. She was arrested along with her father from a border of West Bengal. After that she was sent in Sanlaap Shelter Home and her*

father was sent in a prison of the state. By that time her mother was in the refugee camp of Hyderabad.

It is known from Chakraborty's (2015) paper, 'Stateless and Suspect: Rohingyas in Myanmar, Bangladesh and India' that from 2012 Rohingya children have started to come in Sanlaap Shelter Home in Kolkata in large number. These Rohingya girls are sent to Sanlaap through the State Child Welfare Committee after their arrest for entering in Indian land illegally. Sometimes they are alone and sometimes they are detained along with their family members. After arrest the adults are sent to Correctional Homes under Foreigners Act of India and the children being detached from their parents and relatives are locked up in shelter homes. Maximum children's relatives or parents have come to Sanlaap from the state of Jammu and Delhi in search of their children and take them back to their family.

Parting of families occurs in other context also. One case study is mentioned to make the situation clear. *Satara and Jallal along with their six children left Burma in 2012 and entered India through Hilly border, South Dinajpur, West Bengal. One of their children was with another woman who got arrested from border. But Jallal and Satara could escape to Jammu with their remaining five children. Availing refugee cards they came to Berhampore Central Correctional Home to meet their separated child after two years. At the time of returning they were detained by the police and their refugee cards were seized. Now they are in a prison of W.B. without any connection with their five children who are in Jammu now (Majumder, 2015).*

During fieldwork in 2016 many Rohingya children in Jammu have left some imprint in my mind. They are passing their childhood in a refugee camp within the most unhealthy environment and the only identify of them is a refugee certificate. Malnourishment is apparent at their look. They don't have any toilet training. Consequently the congested camp and the entire environment are burdened with the dirty stench of human waste. For lack of fees and other reasons children of school going age are roaming here and there or doing household work and getting involved with some kind of job

for earning. In brief they are growing up without the most basic necessities of life. Though there is no proper documentation but Rohingya children are also taking birth in Indian land on each and every day.

Section III

Now the two vital questions are—what is / will be the identity of these children and who will take care of them. Their parents are not in a position to look after their kids as like other parents. Moreover the community itself has some problem. Early marriage of women (below 18) and high fertility rate always add more suffering to their marginalized living situation. A human right activist who is working for a considerable period of time with Rohingyas in Bangladesh enlightens me about the fact that Rohingya camps in Bangladesh are always featured by the flood of children and their intolerable sufferings. According to the version of Abul Kalam Azad, Director General of Bangladesh's health services, Rohingya camps are visited by a group under the leadership of the country's family planning department chief and a scheme is developed to launch the birth control campaign. It is known from him that primarily the government intends to offer "short-term family planning kits" including condoms, birth control pills and birth control injections to Rohingyas. "*They are not familiar with the methods of controlling birth. As a result most of the families have five to seven children*" (21 September, 2017)³¹.

The children who are the result of sexual violence may suffer stigma and rejection from the rest of community and in such cases they are going to face a more severe identity crisis. Though this matter is already given much attention and sensitization is also going on but ultimately future can only reveal the final circumstances. Parentless child is another issue of great concern. The racket of traffickers in Bangladesh has already become more organized and active since 2012 with the rising

figure of Rohingyas in Cox Bazaar, Ukhya and Technaff (Kabir, 2015). Additionally the involvement of Rohingya children in different immoral activities is also in place.

These unfortunate children are passing days without all fundamental necessities of childhood and sometimes even without the love of their parents as well as family. They are the children without childhood. No identity, no education, and no protection –all these are universal to Rohingya children. But what is next for them? If the future of these children is still left decided then it'll surely be a matter of severe calamity. Moreover these children will not remain children for ever. If they can't be traced and protected from trafficking and other forms of disaster, then the entire South and South-East region and the world beyond will be in great trouble in very near future. The first and foremost requirement is nationality, an identity that ensures their existence as a legal one. Education is the next requirement to make them aware about the necessity for their improved life conditions. Training and involvement of peer group can do some needful. Labelling Rohingyas as “criminal”, “terrorist” and placing them behind the bars can only contribute to make them more marginalized and vulnerable and the consequences of their marginalization cannot be limited to themselves only.

In the jam-packed and mainly uncontrolled environment of the camps, children countenance a multiplicity of dangers. Separation from parents makes them emotionally as well as socially more insecure. It is essential to take care of them, to compose estimation of their requirement and to be in touch with them. Those who have family should be united with their parents or relatives. But as the situation has produced lots of orphans so some special preparation is also obligatory. A kind of team work is the need of this hour. Alliance among concerned countries (like Bangladesh and India), international as well as national organizations and NGOs are required for that. Tracing Rohingya children, providing them with basic necessities and assisting them to grow-up in a

humane way can save not only them but also the bordering countries that are bearing the pressure of these footloose people for a long time.

In an occasion on 9 February 2016, The Programme Manager, Terre De Homes, Kolkata shares her experience of working with Rohingya children in different Children's Home of West Bengal. She delivers that affected children used to dream about their past life for long. They hear the gun sounds and find themselves running through jungles³². It is really difficult to say how far these ill-treated children, who are the eyewitness of their parents' murder, who lost their parents forever, who are not sure about their fathers' identity, will be able to cope up with these horrifying reminiscences. But it is urgent to take effort to end the indeterminate state of Rohingya children and to save them from more dismal future ahead.

Forced migration and its devastating consequences are not limited to Rohingyas only. Recent news reveals how children from Mexico and other countries of Central America become trapped in the severe Immigration policy while coming to USA. Without parents and other relatives thousands of children and teenagers are left alone in a camp. Being detached from the children their parents and other family member are arrested by the custom department. It's really shocking that the craving of these little brood for their "Mummy" and "Daddy" is unheard to the harshness of law (anandabazar.com ; 19 June,2018)³³.

Refugee children are suffering same kinds of experience throughout the world whether from Syria or from Mexico or from Burma. We are now living in a world of intolerance and unrest. But for peaceful coexistence it is necessary to be liberal to other culture as well as to other religion because by this time the world has become relatively a diverse one. Refugee children particularly a group like Rohingyas and their need cannot be ignored to save the world from bigger disaster and misfortune. As Rohingyas are described as the "most persecuted minority groups in the world"³⁴ so their children are in need of maximum care and support.

Notes

¹<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/aylan-kurdi-s-story-how-a-small-syrian-child-came-to-be-washed-up-on-a-beach-in-turkey-10484588.html>

²https://eisamay.indiatimes.com/world/boats-carrying-rohingya-fleeing-myanmar-sink-killing-46/articleshow/60333947.cms?utm_source=es&utm

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<https://www.newspointapp.com/eisamay/undefined/articleshow.cms?channel=eisamay&url=145048202f9cd3b5f0f4f757503b5d32e2268930&utm>

³ https://eisamay.indiatimes.com/world/bangladesh-prime-minister-in-tears-after-meeting-muslims-in-teknaf-of-coxs-bazar-/articleshow/60480044.cms?utm_source=es&utm

⁴ In 1989 the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) military government changed the state name from Arakan to Rakhine. It is situated in western Myanmar. The researcher used both the names in this paper.

⁵ Myanmar was formerly known as Burma. It was renamed by the then State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military government in 1989. In this paper both the names are used.

⁶<https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/04/22/all-you-can-do-pray/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-muslims>

⁷<http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2017/12/5a1c313a4/100-days-horror-hope-timeline-rohingya-crisis.html>

⁸ The phrase “trapped in limbo” is borrowed from the report titled ‘Lives in Limbo no End in Sight to the Threats Facing Rohingya Children’ by UNICEF CHILD ALERT, February 2018 . See, https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Rohingya_Lives_in_Limbo_Feb_2018.pdf

⁹ Restless Being (<http://www.restlessbeings.org/>) is a U.K. based international human rights organisation working on three key fronts including Child Rights, Refugee Rights and Women's Rights. The Organization is concerned with the plight of Rohingyas. Recently they published a report titled "The Genocide of the Ignored Rohingya" in 2018 based on their research in the period from October 2017 to January 2018 in 8 refugee camps in the Myanmar -Bangladesh Border.

¹⁰ <http://www.rvisiontv.com/a-pregnant-rohingya-woman-killed-in-sittwe-general-hospital/>

¹¹ UNICEF CHILD ALERT February 2018

¹²<https://eisamay.indiatimes.com/world/rohingya-women-children-drown-while-fleeing-myanmar-violence/articleshow/60425948.cms>

¹³<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-60-rohingya-babies-born-bangladesh-refugee-camps-every-day%E2%80%93-unicef>

¹⁴https://www.newspointapp.com/bbcbengali/top-news/articleshow.cms?channel=bbcbengali&url=145048203f25a2d5f26cddc1e399439adddcad10&utm_source=nsp_hfp&utm

¹⁵<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-60-rohingya-babies-born-bangladesh-refugee-camps-every-day%E2%80%93-unicef>

¹⁶<https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/thousands-of-rohingya-rape-victims-expected-to-give-birth-1.3939466>

¹⁷<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/01/nine-months-after-myanmar-assaults-rohingya-camps-ready-for-spate-of-births>

¹⁸<http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-myanmar-rohingya-rape-20180601-story.html>

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰<https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/thousands-of-rohingya-rape-victims-expected-to-give-birth-1.3939466>

²¹UNICEF CHILD ALERT February 2018

²²<https://www.newspointapp.com/bbcbengali/top-news/articleshow.cms?channel=bbcbengali&url=1450482098536a17987de64b6d16d23d309eb034&utm>

²³The Founder/Co-Director of Restless Beings (www.restlessbeings.org) shared a story of a Rohingya boy in her face book wall (<https://www.facebook.com/RahimaShroom>) on 29 May 2018.

²⁴“The Genocide of the Ignored Rohingya” 2018 by Restless Beings.

²⁵<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2018/05/28/rohingya-children-used-as-yaba-mules>

²⁶<http://www.anandabazar.com/national/some-rohingya-muslims-are-linked-with-islamic-state-and-isis-centre-to-supreme-court-1.677157>

²⁷https://www.newspointapp.com/bbcbengali/top-news/articleshow.cms?channel=bbcbengali&url=14504820180af2fbfc21398f43d528b056666c0e&utm_source=nsp_hfp&utm

²⁸ From 1992 in accordance with the “West Bengal Correctional Services Act” the jails/prisons of W.B. are known as Correctional Homes.

²⁹The case study of Ayesha Bibi is taken from the researcher’s previous study ‘Rohingyas: In Search of Life’ (available at http://www.mcrg.ac.in/Rohingyas/Report_Final.pdf).

³⁰<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/08/201281684646546896.html>

³¹<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bangladesh-to-provide-birth-control-kits-to-rohingya-refugees-4854768/>

³²It was the event of the release of a report, “Rohingyas: The Emergence of a Stateless Community”, by Calcutta Research Group (<http://www.mcrg.ac.in/>) arranged in the American Center, Kolkata on 9 February, 2016.

³³https://www.anandabazar.com/international/children-sobbing-amid-row-over-us-immigration-policy-dgtl-1.818905?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=daily

³⁴<https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/7376-origin-of-most-persecuted-minority-statement-unclear.html>

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Pictures:

Picture:1



Alan Kurdi, the Syrian baby boy, on a beach in Turkey.

Source: <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/drowned-boys-family-sought-refuge-in-canada>

Picture:2



Mohammed Shohayet 16 months old Rohingya baby boy on the bank of river Naff.

Source: <http://www.newagebd.net/article/4248/rohingya-childs-image-resembling- aylans-body-goes-viral>

Picture:3



Rohingya Refugee in Jammu, India, July 2016.

Picture taken by Suchismita Majumder, Research Scholar, Dept.of Sociology, University of Kalyani, W.B.

Picture:4



Rohingya Refugee in Bangladesh, September2017.

Picture:5



Picture 4 & 5 : Rohingyas in Balukhali Area, Under Ukhiya Police Station, Cox Bazaar, Bangladesh in September 2017 after the mass inflow of the population in that area.

Both the pictures (4 & 5) were taken and shared by Abu Ahmed Faijul Kabir, Coordinator, Aio O Salish Kendra, Dhaka, Bangladesh, September 2017.

“While every refugee’s story is different and their anguish personal, they all share a common thread of uncommon courage: the courage not only to survive, but to persevere and rebuild their shattered lives.”

---- ANTONIO GUTERRES