

## LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES: A STUDY OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES STAYING IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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### ABSTRACT

*For a long time, Rohingyas have been the most persecuted minority in Myanmar. Recently, the Rohingya issue attracted the attention of nations and international organizations when millions of Rohingya were forced to leave Myanmar and take shelter in other nations. They took refuge in various countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India etc; about 40 thousand Rohingya people are staying in India with the status of refugees. Most of them, which is 5600, is staying in Jammu and Kashmir. It is very difficult to survive as a refugee in a different location and earn a livelihood. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to highlight how they are earning their livelihood in Jammu city and to understand their various livelihood challenges. The author conducted interviews with Rohingya in Jammu city to collect data. In addition to that, secondary data are also used from newspapers, magazines, articles, and papers to write this paper. This paper highlighted that most of the respondents are earning their livelihood through unskilled labor. They are also facing various kind of challenges related to livelihood like, availability of work, salary issues, language etc.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Persecution, Livelihood, Shelter, Rohingya, Minority.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Livelihood opportunities refer to enhancing the ability of households and individuals to provide for themselves by improving their earnings, skills, and material goods in ways that support their priorities and goals. Various refugee livelihood programs are being implemented directly by a wide range of conventional and new players, including those from the corporate sector. These actors include sizable national and local NGOs, faith-based organizations, huge international NGOs, and various government agencies. Most INGOs that help refugees have recently gotten involved in livelihood programming and pro-livelihood campaigning inside and outside camps. (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016)

There is no denying that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) may construct infrastructure and social amenities that are beneficial to economic development for both refugee and indigenous populations (Kagwanja, 2000). Rohingya basically belong to the Rakhine state of Myanmar, and with a 78 percent poverty rate, Rakhine State is the least developed region of Myanmar. Through limitations on marriage, family planning, work, education, religion, and freedom of movement, the Myanmar government has successfully institutionalized discrimination against this ethnic community.

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(Hossain, 2019) Therefore, it could be said that their economic status was not very good in their country of origin. Myanmar did not consider Rohingya as its permanent citizens and labeled them as illegal immigrants from Bengal who came to Myanmar during British rule (Uddin, 2020). Therefore, citizenship rights were denied to them in Myanmar, and Govt. sponsored discriminative policies, violence, torture, etc., led to ms exodus of Rohingya to Bangladesh and other countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and India (Bhatia, et al. 2018) (Kumari, 2017). Through the efforts of human rights observers and scholars in the field, the issue of Rohingya has recently attracted extensive attention from the international community (Howe, 2018). In this paper, livelihood opportunities, as well as challenges that Rohingya are facing, especially at their place of destination (Jammu City) are analyzed.

## **Who are Rohingya?**

It has long been controversial how the term "Rohingya" should be referred to. Some individuals believe that the Rohingya are a group of people that originated in Bengal and then immigrated to Burma during colonial times, while others believe that the Rohingya are people who are native to Arakan in Myanmar. A common belief is that the term Rohingya comes from the Arabic word 'Rahma,' which means mercy. Many historians hold the opinion that there were no individuals known as Rohingyas before the 1950s; it was only at that time that reports of a group of Bengali Muslims traveling to Burma under the Rohingya name began to circulate. Whatever their origins, the Rohingya have faced numerous difficulties due to their statelessness, both in Myanmar and in the nations they have been fleeing to. (Velath & Chopra, 2015)

Rohingya got the status of refugees by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). A person who satisfies the requirements under the relevant definition of a refugee, as outlined in international or regional refugee instruments, under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and in national legislation, is considered a refugee. Persons who are recognised as refugees by UNHCR acting in accordance with its statute and pertinent resolutions of the UN General Assembly are referred to as mandate refugees. Mandate status is particularly important in countries that have not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. According to national laws, stateless people are not legally bound to any State by their nationality. (Allotey & Reidpath, 2019)

Though India is not a signatory to the 151 refugee convention still hosts a large population of Rohingya in different localities. Therefore, it could not be wrong to consider Rohingya as Mandate refugees. It is not easy to get a livelihood in a different country with refugee status. This paper primarily investigates the types of livelihood challenges or means of subsistence for the Rohingyas' staying in Jammu City.

## **Rohingya in India and specifically in Jammu**

Rohingya left Myanmar due to persecution and violence by Myanmar Govt. and forces, which launched a ruthless campaign that resulted in the devastation of Rohingya villages and the deaths of thousands of people. Since they cannot return to Myanmar until conditions improve, Rohingya migration can be called forced migration. Bangladesh has been their leading destination; there are currently more than 919,000 Rohingya.

Their migration to India is pushed by the difficult living conditions in Bangladesh. Before moving to India, the vast majority of respondents had lived or traveled in Bangladesh. The main

reasons they left Bangladesh for India were the deplorable circumstances in the camps, the lack of economic opportunities, and the animosity of the local populace. (Brenner, 2019)

As per the policy report Number 24 titled ‘Nobody’s children, owners of nothing’: Analyzing the Indian state’s policy response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, by Mudasar Amin, published by The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy in 2018, Rohingya are presently staying in various locations in India. Most of them are staying in Jammu city, which is 5600 (Chaudhury & Ranbir, 2015), (Amin, 2018).

## **Objectives of the study**

To understand livelihood opportunities available for Rohingya in Jammu city.

To analyze the main challenges related to livelihood.

## **Methodology**

This paper is descriptive in nature. Purposive sampling and Snowball sampling techniques have been used for the collection of data. Both primary and secondary data have been used for the purpose of this study. The respondents for this paper are Rohingya people who are staying in Jammu city because many Rohingya have been staying there for the last 10 or 12 years. Secondary data sources have also been used in this paper, including books, Journal articles, papers, Government manuals and magazines related to the subject under study. Primary data has been collected with the help of a semi-structured interview schedule. SPSS software has also been used for the analysis of results and data. In this study, respondents are selected by using purposive sampling. Due to the fact that it denotes the deliberate selection of sample units that meet specific predetermined criteria, purposely, only those respondents have been selected who have been staying there for more than five years. Accordingly, a sample of 70 respondents who are the head of the family was chosen from Jammu city and interviewed. Moreover, the translator's help has also been sought as and when required to interview the respondents who did not know the local language.

## **Data analysis**

For this study, primary data has been collected through fieldwork by using a semi-structured Interview schedule in which the investigator records responses. Translators have also been used while conducting interviews for respondents who did not know the local language, Hindi/English. After coding and tabulating, the collected data were analyzed using software like SPSS and MS Office Word/ Excel.

## **Results And Discussion**

### **Livelihood**

Livelihood decision-making is based on an individual’s perceptions of livelihood opportunities and challenges (Kumar, 2020). Livelihood is the means of subsistence or support. Rohingya have been staying in Jammu city with their refugee status, and livelihood is vital for their survival. Moreover, for refugees, livelihood options are based on the available livelihood opportunities and challenges at their place of destination. Therefore, an attempt has been made by the researcher to understand the livelihood profile of the respondents at their place of destination.

**TABLE NO. 1 DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS ON THE BASIS OF EXISTING LIVELIHOOD PROFILE AT THEIR PLACE OF DESTINATION**

Livelihood Profile	No. of respondents	Percentage
Unskilled Labor	32	45.8
Skilled Labor	27	38.6
Teacher	2	2.8
Religious Priest	1	1.4
Shopkeeper	3	4.3
Labor Contractor	2	2.8
None or Unemployed	3	4.3
Total	70	100.0

The results with the help of Table No.1 revealed the livelihood profile of the respondents at their place of destination. Some of the respondents narrated that though it was not easy for them to earn a livelihood; they somehow managed to get it with the help of their own community leaders and the help of the local community. The data shows that 32 respondents are earning their livelihood through unskilled labor; on the other hand, 27 respondents are through skilled labor or work. Two of the respondents are teachers (not Govt. teachers) who respondents themselves hire to teach their children. One is a shopkeeper. Moreover, two of the respondents are labor contractors, and three are unemployed.

### Challenges relative to livelihood

Livelihood is essential for the survival of any individual or community. Being a refugee, it is not easy to get work or employment at their place of destination. The researcher has made an attempt to understand the challenges related to livelihood that respondents are facing at their place of destination.

**TABLE NO.2 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ON THE BASIS OF CHALLENGES RELATIVE TO THEIR LIVELIHOOD**

Challenges	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Hard to find work	25	35.8
Salary issues	21	30.0
Discrimination or Harassment	10	14.2
Language issue	14	20.0
Total	70	100

As demonstrated in table no.2, 25 respondents out of 70 revealed that it is very difficult for them to get work at their place of destination. They also said that they get work with the help of their own community and the local community. 21 respondents said that salary issue is most likely to happen in which sometimes they do not get salary in time, or sometimes they work more and receive less. Ten of the respondents revealed that the environment at their working place is not good, and sometimes they face discrimination either by the employer or co-workers. There are 14 respondents who revealed that language is also one of the main issues in earning a livelihood because they do not know or know a little bit of the local language of Jammu. Respondents also said that sometimes they travel a long distance for work.

### CONCLUSION

Rohingya became stateless in their country of origin because of systematic discriminatory policies and denial of citizenship rights. Subsequently, they were forced to leave their country of origin and to take shelter in other countries. They took shelter in various countries and also in India. In India majority of the Rohingya are staying in Jammu city. Getting a livelihood or employment is not easy, especially when you are in a different location. Though they are earning their livelihood over there, an attempt has been made to understand their job or livelihood profile and also the challenges related to it at their place of destination. The majority of the respondents are unskilled laborers. Moreover, most respondents revealed that finding a job or work is difficult. Therefore, it is clear that respondents are refugees trying hard to survive in a different location and a different environment. In other words it can be said that they are earning their livelihood and surviving but also facing challenges related to it.

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