

ISSN- 1811-5195
Bangladesh Journal of Administration and Management (BJAM)
Volume-34, Issue-01



Published by
Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy
Shahbag, Dhaka-1000
Published in January 2022

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Cross Border Coordination & Global Governance Challenges : A Review on Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Mehruba Islam

Abstract

Leaving no refugee behind is the newly incorporated indicator on refugees in the global agenda SDG. This specific indicator in SDG framework is a game-changer in global governance. At present throughout the world, around 65.6 million people are identified as refugee. Significant portion of the global refugees are from developing countries, mostly hailing from Asia. At present, Bangladesh is weighed down with more than 1.1million Rohingya refugee. Although the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is working with the mandate to protect refugees, and assist them through voluntary repatriation, no noteworthy progress has yet been observed in this regard. The ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis of Bangladesh has turned into a regional crisis with regional consequences which is the reflection of regional governance gap. Nevertheless, a wide range of factors like poor local, regional and global governance fueled the growing refugee trend along with poor coordination problems. The study identifies the gaps and debates around refugees in the field of global governance. The study has pointed out the role and effectiveness of multilateralism in regional and global institutions regarding the refugee issue. This study also recommended the necessity of institutional networking to ensure effective regional and global governance in order to manage refugee crisis. In addition, the necessity of coordination among global institutions has been emphasized for better refugee management that aims at safe repatriation and resettlement plan. Nevertheless, coordination networking among international and regional bodies is mostly important to resolve the refugee issue.

Keywords :

Refugee, Resettlement, Governance gap, Multilateralism, Repatriation plan, Coordination networking

Introduction

Refugees are the forcibly displaced person who have fled from their country of origin. Around 65.6 million people in the world are identified as refugee because of persecution and violence which is the highest ever after World War II (Bank &Fröhlich, 2018). Among them 20 million including 7 million children have to run away from their homeland. Around 86% of these refugees are from developing countries, mostly hailing from Asia. Conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Myanmar forced South Asia to host refugees from both within and outside the region (Ahmed, 2018). At present, throughout the world around 19.9 million refugees are surviving with bleak future. Among them around 8.7 millions are at Asia including 1.1 million in Bangladesh (Sharma, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Bangladesh, the highly densely populated country of 160 million has to shelter 1.1 million rohingya refugees coming from the borderline country Myanmar. In addition, Bangladesh

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has to deploy both of her physical and human resource to manage the Rohingya refugees. This never-ending crisis has some other adverse consequences in the socio-economic lifeline of Bangladesh. Neither the global institutions nor the Myanmar government is concerned enough to start the repatriation process. Amidst such a humanitarian crisis, global governance has been identified as the single most powerful tool that could refer to political cooperation and negotiation in response to refugee problems and affect more than one state or region. However, coordination between different governments or international agencies is widely assumed as most amicable way to deal with the rohingya refugee challenges, where global leader will be the key governance actors to bind and treat all those issues properly towards achieving the safe repatriation objective. Notwithstanding the facts, UNHCR, the custodian agency for identifying policy and governance gaps in terms of SDG achievements for refugees, has not demonstrated any significant success.

Research Questions

1. What are the existing global governance gap while dealing with Rohingya refugee issue?
2. How the governance gap could be better addressed?

Research Methods

This qualitative study followed a secondary data analysis method as an approach to investigate on the research topic. This qualitative study attempts to drawing upon relevant literature and presents the existing theories and models focused on refugee management from governance perspective. The history of refugee crisis and the transitional challenges relating to forced migration has been examined for a better understanding of the research topic. This study also incorporates an in-depth analysis of open-access secondary documents which are focused on the global governance gap. In addition, the study used relevant quantitative data from secondary sources. Furthermore, the study covers in depth interviews of 10 students from Myanmar and a focus group discussion with 15 international students from 15 different countries enrolled in various types of Master's program in the University of Melbourne, Australia. Their views have been incorporated in this study from the global governance perspective.

Literature Review

Refugee crisis mainly arise from two basic problem- first one is forceful migration due to political unrest situation or war, and another one is voluntary migration towards developed countries in search of better livelihood and work opportunity. However, the European context of refugee migration has been analyzed widely by several authors mainly from the point of pull and push factors to identify solutions to the problem. In reality, instead of

looking for solutions outside Europe, the EU and its Member States must reform asylum policy and support frontier states (Kugiel, 2016). In south asia, the refugee issue is mainly originated from internal and inter country conflict. Bangladesh, Iran and Pakistan are the best example of the refugee hosting country. Iran and Pakistan, the two countries are hosting large number of Afghan refugees. Both countries have continued to talk about returning refugees to their homeland, UNHCR did not pay any attention (Ahmed, 2016). It is therefore important to think of alternative options through which the host countries of South Asia can be supported. In this context, the North-South cooperation through greater engagement between the EU and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to address protracted refugee situations is needed. Despite criticism on its performance, the importance of SAARC cannot be ignored (Ahmed, 2019). Both UNHCR and Afgan have vested interested in Pakistan. Therefore, none of them are interested to start repatriation process. On the other hand, Pakistan was highly criticized for raising the repatriation issue of Afgan refugees in global arena (Gufran,2011).

Background of Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Most of the refugee crises in the history are triggered by internal conflicts in which ethnic identity is a prominent element and civilians are often used as weapons (Loscher, 2009). Indian subcontinent has refugee problem since British period. Rohingya refugees have been living in the place Rakhine (former name Arakan) for hundred years. After the independence of Burma in 1948 (now Myanmar) Arakan became part of Myanmar. In 1962, emergence of army coup and martial law in Myanmar, brought misfortune for these people (Islam, 2018).Rohingyas are the world's most persecuted Muslim minority residing in Myanmar for generations (Ahmed, 2010). Myanmar government has denied them as the citizens of Myanmar. The Rohingya have been experiencing ethnic and religious persecution within Myanmar's borders. Later on, hundreds of thousands have fled to borderline countries in including Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines. The majorities of Rohingya refugees have runaway to Bangladesh and were settled in two officially registered refugee camps in the district of Cox's Bazar.

Recently, violence in Myanmar has turned into a devastating stage which forced 1.1 million refugees to abandon their homeland and take shelter in Bangladesh. Since the 1970s the Rohingyas have started to find their shelter in Bangladesh. In 2012, Bangladesh denied to accommodate the Rohingya refugees as its national security was threatened. Despite having asylum for more than 20 years some of the rohingyaare involved in anti-government activities along with drug peddling, social violence etc. Now in 2021, Bangladesh is once again on the jeopardy of analogous tricks.

Identified global governance gap in dealing with the Rohingya Refugee issue

Refugee crises are not new in world politics rather it is a persistent problem since the post-World War II. Generally, the refugees from the developing 'Third World' either remain in neighboring countries of first asylum or to return to country of origin (Lui, 2004). Currently nearly two-thirds of the world's refugees are in unending exile (UNHCR, 2009a). According to UNHCR, all the 25 countries mostly affected by the protracted refugee situations (PRS) are in the developing world (Guterres, 2010) and leading to political and security concerns for host countries through raising tensions between refugees, the local people and the international community (Loescher and Milner, 2005a). Such situations make the regional and global governance questionable as well as ineffective. Moreover, internal socio-political dilemma followed by communal conflict of a country or within two country or invasion by external country is the core cause of forced migration. Initially, refugee problem have effect on border and then it become a global problem, more specifically a matter of global politics. World history of refugee reflects the global political division from different angles. Geopolitical as well as geo-economic interests fuel the facts and decide the future of the destitute people.

Inter-State power politics and organizational role

State contributions to the UNHCR and state behavior is highly influenced by the international organization (Vayrynen, 2001). Alternatively, organizations like UNHCR are always in search of secure donor states (Roper & Barria, 2010). For instance - the Rohingya refugee problem arises from internal governance problem of Myanmar. To be more specific, China has a good private trade relation in Myanmar. Gas supply line of China passes over the area of Rakhine (the Rohingya occupant area) which needs to be clear up for their private benefit. Similarly, China and Russia placed veto on the recommendation of UN fact finding missions in creating UN backed safe zone creation in Myanmar to ensure safe rehabilitation of the Rohingya which is a barrier on global governance. China did it for the sake of attaining greater public benefit along with good diplomatic relation with borderline Myanmar government. In this regard, Castles (2003) states that- "The northern economic interests played a role in perpetuating local wars while also contributing to underdevelopment in the South through their trade and intellectual property regimes." (Castles, 2003:p.13-14)

However, Ruggie (1993) analyzed the state behaviors and used to examine the determinants influencing the Northern countries' contributions to protect refugee in the South. To promote cooperation approaches, the discrepancy of capabilities, bargaining power, the interests of the Northern countries, use of the UNHCR to develop Northern countries' awareness of the inter-linkage across issue-areas is important (Betts, 2008). For