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'Resettlement is worthwhile for our children's future': reflections from the Stateless Rohingya refugees in Malaysia

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Abstract

Resettlement to a third country offers a durable solution for refugees who cannot integrate into their asylum or transit countries. While most studies focus on the experiences of refugees after their arrival in resettlement countries or on the political aspects of resettlement, fewer studies explore refugees' perspectives prior to resettlement. This paper examines how Rohingyas in Malaysia view their resettlement opportunities. We collected qualitative micronarratives from 56 adult Rohingyas living in Malaysia between March and September 2019, to explore the complexities of their decision-making processes. The findings indicate that most Rohingyas aspire to resettle in another country to gain legal status or citizenship, providing a better future for their children, including access to education and healthcare. However, preferences among Rohingyas vary: while some are eager to resettle, others express a strong desire to return to their home country in Myanmar. Still, others wish to reunite with family in Myanmar or Bangladesh, and a significant minority are reluctant to resettle in non-Islamic countries, reflecting broader concerns about cultural and religious compatibility. This study highlights the varied resettlement preferences among Rohingyas, underscoring the need for resettlement policies to consider these diverse priorities to enhance the effectiveness of resettlement programs.

Keywords Resettlement, Rohingya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Micronarratives, Bangladesh

Introduction

At the end of 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were 43.4 million refugees worldwide, with 31.6 million under its mandate. The majority of these refugees (75%) reside in low and middle-income countries (UNHCR, 2023a). This article focuses on the Rohingyas, a predominantly Muslim stateless group from Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar (Parashar and Alam, 2019; Kyaw, 2017). The United Nations (UN) has designated the Rohingyas as the most persecuted minority in the world (Human Rights Council, 2017). Most recently in August 2017, nearly one million Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh to escape genocide, crimes against humanity, and systematic discrimination in Myanmar (Martuscelli et al., 2024; Uddin,

2020). Most Rohingya refugees, approx. 984,591, are now in Bangladesh (UNHCR, 2024a). Smaller populations reside in Malaysia (109,000), India (22,000), Indonesia (2,000), and other neighbouring countries. Additionally, about 630,000 Rohingyas are currently living as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar (OCHA, 2023: 16). These countries are not part of the 1951 Convention and do not have national asylum systems, making UNHCR the responsible authority to recognise people as refugees. To build better futures for refugees and ensuring a sustainable, dignified, and peaceful life, the UNHCR proposes three long-term solutions: voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and integration within the host community (UNHCR, 2011). This article focuses on the resettlement component as a potential solution to the protracted crisis, although it is not yet an effective model, with less than 1% success in UNHCR-led resettlement efforts (UNHCR, 2023a). Rohingyas in camps in Bangladesh and in urban and rural areas in Malaysia live in a temporary situation without opportunities for local integration or access to work. Therefore, their only expectation for a durable solution is resettlement in a third country that could grant them rights and legal status. The UNHCR (2011: 9) defines "resettlement" as:

> *The selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalised citizen of the resettlement country.*

In summary, resettlement involves the relocation of refugees from an asylum country to a third country. The UNHCR recognises the importance of the meaningful participation of refugees 'so that their problems, initiatives and solutions can be incorporated into all UNHCR's programmes and policies' (UNHCR, 2011: 174). However, most studies on refugee resettlement focus on the situation of refugees in resettlement countries or the politics of resettlement (Phillimore et al., 2021). Few consider refugees' opinions on resettlement (Uddin, 2024a). Besides that, there are more refugees in need of resettlement than countries willing to receive them (UNHCR, 2023a). This resettlement gap limits refugees' preferences. Considering refugees' voices about resettlement is essential to construct policies that fit the need of refugees living in different contexts. This article aims to understand Rohingya refugees' perception to resettlement choices by taking Malaysia as a case study. It also contributes to avoid creating false expectations and disappointments for those that are eventually resettled and decreasing the risk of resettlement failure when resettled refugees return to their transit or origin countries.

The mass exodus of Rohingyas into Bangladesh or its neighbouring countries from Myanmar is not a recent phenomenon. Some of the major waves of Rohingya influx occurred in 1978, 1992, 2012, and 2015 (Ahmed et al., 2021). On some occasions resettlement of Rohingyas to Myanmar and other countries happened with limited success. For example, back in 1978, nearly 180,000 out of 250,000 Rohingyas returned to Myanmar from Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2010). Again, a total of 2,155 Rohingyas[1] were resettled

[1] It is hard to find a specific number of resettled Rohingyas since they enter statistics as Myanmar nationals. The number of 2,155 is the addition of resettled Rohingyas from Malaysia (Equal Rights Trust, 2010, 2014) and Bangladesh (Paul and Das 2020) until 2016.

in the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, New Zealand, Japan, Denmark, and Sweden (Huennekes, 2018) from Bangladesh and Malaysia until 2014. Resettlement was not perceived as a durable solution for Rohingyas living in Bangladesh because the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) stopped the program in 2010, fearing that going to a developed country could push new arrivals in Bangladesh. However, between 2006 and 2010, approx. 920 Rohingya previously living in Bangladesh were resettled in Australia, Canada, and the USA (Paul and Das 2020). At the moment, most Rohingyas have no possibility of resettlement. Currently, only Rohingyas living in Malaysia and registered with UNHCR can be considered as candidates for resettlement. Their resettlement also depends on the prioritisation criteria of UNHCR and resettlement third countries which is not always clear to refugees.

This article analyses how Rohingyas living in Malaysia reflect on their possibilities of resettlement. It is based on the micronarratives (Ahmed, 2019) of 56 adult Rohingyas collected between March and September 2019. Our reflection considers refugees as agents of their lived experiences and experts of their resettlement possibilities. Understanding Rohingyas' position on resettlement is useful because they are not recognised as Myanmar nationals, and they do not have citizenship or legal documents. Their perceptions on resettlement, including why they want or not to be resettled, may differ from refugees that are not stateless. This article adds to the discussions on South-South refugee fluxes. It also contributes to the literature that understands refugees' narratives at the moment before the resettlement. Finally, it helps to deconstruct the myth that all refugees want to be resettled in developed countries.

The following section discusses the literature that considers refugees' perceptions of resettlement in different countries. After that, this paper contextualises the situation of refugees living in Malaysia since this affects Rohingyas' answer to the question if they want to be resettled. The fourth section presents the methodology of this study. The results and discussion section has two parts: the first one presents the perception of Rohingyas willing to be resettled. The second one discusses why some Rohingyas do not want to be resettled or are reticent to go to non-Islamic countries. The final section discusses our findings, highlighting the contributions of our work to the debate on refugees' perceptions about resettlement.

How do refugees perceive resettlement?

Most studies on refugees and resettlement consider the situation in the resettlement countries. Some focus on local communities' perception and public opinion on resettlement (e.g., Scribner, 2017; Esses et al., 2017). Others consider the living experiences of refugees in resettlement countries (e.g., Evans et al., 2022; Shaw et al., 2021). Another important literature reflects on the role of different actors supporting refugees in resettlement countries, including civil society and faith-based organisations (e.g., Eby et al., 2011; Dubus, 2018). Many studies focus on the politics of resettlement, that is, how States design and implement their resettlement programs (e.g. Welfens and Bonjour, 2021; Garnier et al., 2018). Among them, the private sponsorship resettlement program for refugees in Canada received particular academic attention (e.g., Labman, 2016; Hyndman et al., 2017).

However, few studies consider refugees' perceptions of resettlement in transit countries before they go to third/resettlement countries (Van Selm, 2004, 2014). They focus,

for example, on the situation of Iraqis in Jordan (Saltsman, 2011), Lebanon and Syria (Riller, 2009); Liberians in Ghana (Addo, 2016); Somalis in Kenya (Ikanda, 2018; Horst, 2006), Sudanese in Egypt (Perera, 2018; Currie, 2007), and Iranians waiting for US resettlement in Austria (Fee 2022). These studies are useful to understand refugees as actors in their resettlement decisions, the determinants in the transit countries/refugee camps that influence their decisions to apply for resettlement and their expectations on resettlement.

A first factor that influences refugees' perceptions on resettlement is having friends and relatives that are already resettled. Saltsman (2011) reflects on the importance of informal networks to provide information for Iraqis living in Jordan. Relatives and friends already resettled in other countries provide information for refugees about life in resettlement countries, but they can also exaggerate the resettlement experience (Horst, 2006; Riller, 2009). Studies with refugees in transit country show that refugees prefer to be resettled in places where they have networks, including friends and family, where they can easily feel a sense of belonging (Perera, 2018; Ikanda, 2018). Ikanda (2018) and Horst (2006) explain the role of remittances creating the imaginary of resettlement as the main opportunity for Somali refugees living in Kenya to have a better life. Media, movies and information on the Internet can also affect refugees' ideas on resettlement (Riller, 2009). Perera (2018) explains that resettlement expectations depend on the social context of the exile countries and the information received from those who are already abroad. However, these perceptions may not necessarily reflect reality. Many refugees will be disappointed in resettlement countries (Riller, 2009). The majority will not be resettled, making these false expectations unattainable.

The social imaginaries involved in the perspectives/expectations of resettlement are so strong for some refugee communities that refugees will adopt different strategies to have higher chances of being resettled (Elliott, 2012; Jansen, 2008; Horst, 2006). Some studies discussed refugees living in camps in Kenya and their strategies to access resettlement, including negotiating/performing their vulnerability and insecurity through sending letters to UNHCR and gathering documents to show their suffering (Elliott, 2012; Jansen, 2008; Horst, 2006). There is a culture of disbelief where organisations see refugees as dishonest people trying to manipulate the truth to be resettled (Ikanda, 2018; Elliott, 2012). Additionally, in cases where resettlement applications are not successful, refugees can be depressed and even suicidal (Horst, 2006). Besides that, waiting for resettlement creates uncertainty in refugees' lives. It involves material (money decisions and prohibitions from work/access to education), emotional (anxiety and fear of rejection) and physical (not having access to medical treatment) costs (Fee, 2022). Access to resettlement also affects the marriage practices of refugees (Currie, 2007).

Another factor influencing refugees' decision to apply for resettlement is their situation in the transit countries or refugee camps. Iraqis displaced in Jordan had no access to residency, healthcare and legal employment, suffered abuses and lived in unhealthy situations, which motivated them to search for better living conditions in a third country (Saltsman, 2011). In fact, most Iraqis in Lebanon and Jordan were not happy with their situation. They had no intention to integrate into the host community (Riller, 2009). Sudanese refugees had no access to healthcare, job market and education in Cairo (Perera, 2018). Refugees lived in difficult situations in camps in Kenya (Ikanda, 2018; Elliott, 2012). Somalis had no perspectives to integrate in Kenya or to return to their

countries (Horst, 2006). Perera (2018) also explains that Sudanese refugees were not happy with their living arrangements in Cairo and felt stressed with their contact with the host population. Addo (2016) concluded that most Liberian refugees living in Ghana knew resettlement was a limited durable solution. However, they wanted to have better employment opportunities, access to training, shelter, education, and healthcare, which they could not access in Ghana. Immoral experiences in transit countries may affect refugees' decisions to be resettled in any place as an attempt to leave that ruthless situation (Perera, 2018).

Perera (2018) concludes that Sudanese refugees wish to be resettled to access fundamental rights, including education (for them and their children), work, healthcare, housing, and freedoms denied to them in their country of origin (Sudan) and destination (Egypt). Many Sudanese refugees in Cairo reflected that resettlement could be a chance of recovering the humanity taken from them in Egypt. Iraqi refugees wanted to be resettled to guarantee their children's future in democratic countries that would guarantee their freedom and rights (Riller, 2009). Some also wanted to have access to citizenship and a travel document that would allow them to visit their families abroad (Riller, 2009).

A challenge for refugees is access to information about resettlement. Saltsman (2011) explains that sixty per cent of the Iraqis displaced in Jordan had no access to information. The participants did not trust the institutions involved in the procedures due to a lack of transparency and clarity of resettlement criteria. Sudanese refugees in Cairo did not trust UNHCR as well since they perceived the agency was favouring Syrians for resettlement (Perera, 2018). Refugees in Kenya also perceived that resettlement occurred arbitrarily and accused UNHCR of unfairness, mistreatment, racism (preferring refugees that are not black), and corruption (Elliott, 2012). Many refugees did not receive any information about their resettlement procedures after months of the first interview, which increased their suspicions (Elliott, 2012). Refugees see UNHCR as the primary decision-maker on resettlement (Riller, 2009).

The Rohingya resettlement programs have not been quite successful so far, with only a few thousand refugees resettled in countries like the USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden (Uddin, 2024a; Evans et al., 2023). This represents only a tiny fraction of the total number of displaced individuals in the region, including IDPs in Myanmar. According to Uddin (2024a), the Rohingya diaspora in the USA, UK, Malaysia, and other countries maintains strong kinship networks with Rohingyas in Bangladesh, eagerly waiting for the third country resettlement programs to resume again. However, the GoB alone cannot resolve this issue; it requires a pragmatic approach from international communities and the UN. Mithun (2023) found through qualitative interviews with Rohingyas in Bangladesh that the majority are willing to resettle, driven by the lack of work permits and higher education opportunities in Bangladesh. They prefer to resettle in countries where they have relatives or a strong Rohingya diaspora, seeking places where they will not face discrimination based on their religious identity and will enjoy full freedom of religious practice (Mithun, 2023). Uddin (2024a) analysed Rohingyas' resettlement perspectives through three individual case studies from Bangladesh, challenging the traditional notion of 'resettlement'. For Rohingyas, resettlement in an ideal world means finding a safer place that ensures basic human rights, livelihood opportunities, community development, cultural integration, and a better future for their children, achievable through local integration, relocation

to another country or place, and return to their homeland in Myanmar (Uddin, 2024a). Resettled Rohingyas in the USA face challenges related to interpreters' lack of knowledge about the Rohingya language, cultural and gender roles, alternative mental health services, and adaptation to new cultures and environments, setting expectations for facilities and living standards (Evans et al., 2023, 2024). These lessons should inform future Rohingya resettlement programs.

From the literature, it is understood that the main determinants in a refugees' decision to apply for/ agree to resettlement are having networks in the resettlement countries (access to information), search for security and better living conditions, and freedom of religion and independent liberty, and limited access to rights in asylum (transit) countries. This study on Rohingyas in Malaysia contributes to this literature by highlighting the perspective of this understudied forced displaced population on resettlement. Although the greatest part of the refugees that participated in these studies wanted to be resettled, some refugees in Kenya (Elliott, 2012) and Iraqis in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria (Riller, 2009) did not desire the resettlement. Most of these Iraqis preferred to be close to Iraq and aimed to have residency and legal right to work in the transit countries. Some got married to locals and did not want to leave the Middle East. According to Riller (2009: 20), 'the majority of the respondents complained that if resettlement meant splitting up couples and separating families across the world then resettlement was painful and harmful'. Similarly, in the context of Rohingyas in Bangladesh, some prefer integration with host communities over resettlement in an unknown third country, due to cultural and linguistic similarities, as well as the certainty of a relatively secure and peaceful living condition (Uddin, 2024a). This finding is interesting to deconstruct the assumption that all refugees want to be resettled in developed countries. This article also adds to this discussion because some Rohingyas presented reserves on resettlement, which will be explained in the results and discussion section.

Rohingyas' situation in Malaysia

Considering that the situation in the transit country impacts refugees' perceptions on resettlement, this section briefly reflects on the situation of Rohingyas living in Malaysia. The selecting of Malaysia as the focus of this research is motivated by the fact that most studies on the Rohingya crisis concentrate on Bangladesh (Uddin, 2020; Ahmed, 2010), with increasing attention from case studies in India (Field et al., 2023; Nair, 2022) and Malaysia (Letchamanan, 2013, Ehmer & Kothari, 2021). We aim for this article to introduce fresh perspectives on the Rohingya narratives concerning resettlement choices and to contribute to the debate on the viability of resettlement as a durable solution for long-term global refugee crisis.

Rohingyas primarily arrive in Malaysia illegally by boat from Myanmar and Bangladesh. They undertake a dangerous journey across the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, attempting to infiltrate through the Malacca Strait to reach the coastal shores of Malaysia (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, many drown or go missing during the precarious journey.

According to UNHCR (2024b), there were over 189,000 refugees and asylum-seekers registered in Malaysia, including 166,290 people from Myanmar, of which 109,230 were Rohingyas, and the majority of them (65%) were male. Although Rohingyas were the largest refugee population at that time living in Malaysia, nearly 25% of Rohingyas were

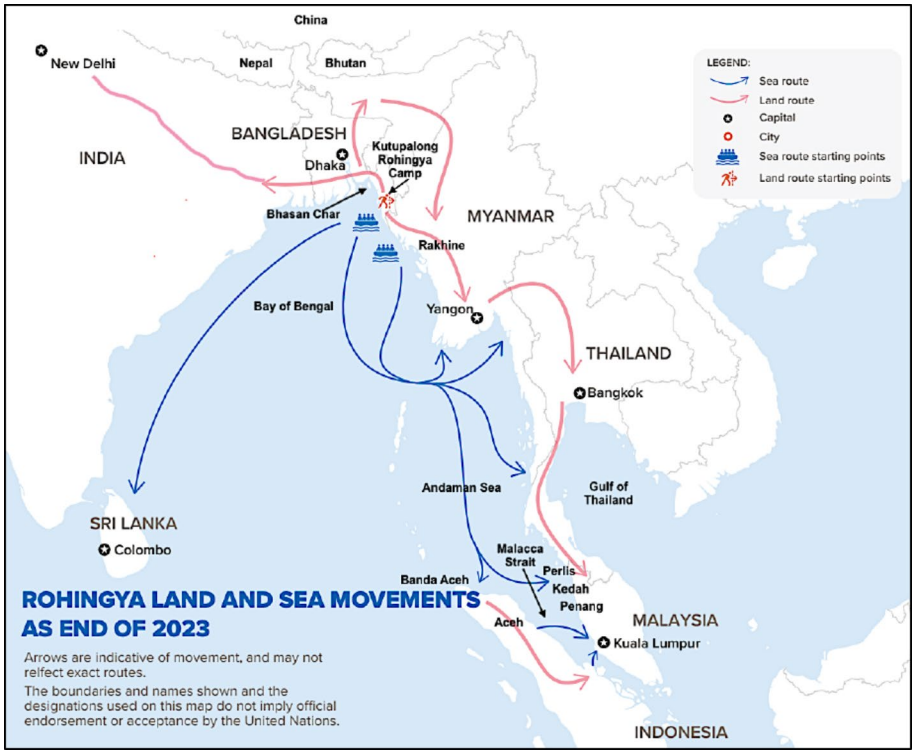

Fig. 1 Rohingyas' desperate journey to neighbouring countries by sea and land routes.Source: UNHCR, 2023b (p. 37).

not still registered with UNHCR because they do not know how to do it or because of the costs involved in the process (Kassim, 2015; Wake and Cheung, 2016). Forced displaced people in Malaysia live in rural/urban informal settlements and not in refugee camps (Letchamanan, 2013; Wake and Cheung, 2016). Rohingyas have been coming to Malaysia since the 1970s, with more people arriving especially in 1991–1992 and after 2012 and 2016, but not in 2017. Rohingyas see Malaysia as a place for employment opportunities and also where they can find protection since it is a Muslim State (Azis, 2014; Kassim, 2015; Wake and Cheung, 2016).

According to UNHCR Malaysia (2024b), registered asylum-seekers go through a refugee status determination procedure conducted by UNHCR. If they are recognised as refugees, they will receive a UNHCR card that grants them temporary protection in Malaysia. However, Malaysia is not part of the 1951 Convention and has no national asylum procedure. Because of this, refugees are classified as irregular migrants according to the Malaysian Immigration Act 1959/1963 (Wake and Cheung, 2016). Hence, even refugees recognised by UNHCR are not legally allowed to work in Malaysia. They cannot access the public education system (they depend on UNHCR learning centres to educate their children) and have limited access to healthcare. In 2006, the Malay government implemented a program to grant work permits to Rohingya refugees. However, the process was stopped after a couple of months due to corruption claims (Wake and Cheung, 2016). Overall, Rohingyas' presence is tolerated in Malaysia.

Many studies and reports reflected that the situation of refugees in Malaysia is precarious (e.g., Equal Rights Trust, 2014; Wake and Cheung, 2016). Since they are not legally allowed to work, Rohingyas face situations of abuse by employers and have to perform

hazardous and dangerous works in restaurants, constructions sites, and plantations (Wake and Cheung, 2016). If they get sick or suffer work-related accidents, they have no access to compensation or social protection (Wake and Cheung, 2016). Most Rohingyas receive lower salaries than the local populations (Sahak et al. 2020) and reside in precarious accommodations (Chandran et al., 2020). Rohingyas in Malaysia have to send remittances to their families living in Myanmar and/or Bangladeshi camps. They may also receive remittances from relatives living abroad (Huennekes, 2018). Refugees may also be arrested since they are working without a valid permit. They face a permanent risk of arrest, detention, extortion and harassment from local authorities (Chandran et al., 2020; Wake and Cheung, 2016; O'Brien and Hoffstaedter, 2020).

Rohingyas in Malaysia complain that they do not have proper documents (Azis, 2014), they cannot educate their kids in the Malaysian public system (Letchamanan, 2013), and they face challenges to access healthcare (language barriers, high costs and poor quality of service) (Chandran et al., 2020). They also have to employ different strategies to not being arrested (like bribing police officers) and to access basic rights (like buying SIM cards and motorbikes in the name of Malaysian nationals) (O'Brien and Hoffstaedter, 2020; Wake and Cheung, 2016). They also suffer discrimination from the local community (Azis, 2014). Rohingya women felt uncertain about the asylum system and lived in poverty because they and their husbands could not legally work (Tazreiter et al., 2017). Other Rohingyas adopt the strategy of being invisible to avoid discrimination and abuses (Letchamanan, 2013; O'Brien and Hoffstaedter, 2020). Rohingya children born in Malaysia are also treated as stateless, because they have no access to citizenship (Azis, 2014).

In their survey with Rohingya women living in Malaysia, Tazreiter et al. (2017) concluded that most of their respondents found life in Malaysia harder than their initial expectation, which affected their preferences to continue to live in the country. Only 3% of the Rohingya women would like to stay in Malaysia, but 60% of them wanted to stay indefinitely in the country when they planned their journey. Most women wanted to be resettled in Australia or the USA to have better living opportunities, including security and protection, access to employment, and education for their children (Tazreiter et al., 2017). Overall, Rohingyas do not feel at home in Malaysia and do not perceive local integration as a durable solution (Azis, 2014; Wake and Cheung, 2016), which makes resettlement the only feasible option for them. However, many perceived barriers to resettlement, including not being registered with UNHCR, lack of information on resettlement procedures and UNHCR's preferred tendency to resettle other Burmese ethnic groups like the Chin that are mostly Christians (Azis, 2014; Wake and Cheung, 2016).

UNHCR Malaysia (2024) provides specific information on resettlement to refugees registered in the country. Nevertheless, it is hard for Rohingyas to be resettled because most of them are illiterate and Muslim. States prefer Burmese refugees with higher integration prognoses and better-educated Rohingyas that can speak English (O'Brien and Hoffstaedter, 2020; Letchamanan, 2013; Kassim, 2015). By 2010, only 610 Rohingyas had been resettled from Malaysia (Equal Rights Trust, 2010). Between 2013 and 2014, 625 Rohingyas left Malaysia to resettlement countries (Equal Rights Trust, 2014). Sahak et al. (2020) argue that UNHCR's priorities for resettlement have moved to the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, where other humanitarian crises are rising. Finally, some Rohingyas do not have possibilities of resettlement because they married Malaysian or Indonesian nationals in Malaysia (Letchamanan, 2013).

Methodology

Narratives are a useful methodology in forced migration studies because they allow refugees to express themselves more freely. It recognises them as experts of their lived experiences. It also grants researchers access to refugees' in-depth stories that could not appear with the use of other methods (Eastmond, 2007). This article was part of a research project. All formal high-risk ethics approval, fieldwork permissions and dynamic risk assessment procedures were conducted before the data collection. For this paper, we analysed 56 micronarratives of adult Rohingyas living in Malaysia collected between March and September 2019, supported by our Malaysian partner team and three other trained research assistants.

All of the story collectors could speak the Rohingyan language and had information about the situation of Rohingyas in Myanmar, which helped to construct trust between them and the participants. The relationship between the storyteller and the story collector is the central pillar of the micronarrative methodology (Ahmed, 2019). All the data were kept anonymised during the entire research process, following data protection guidelines. Participants granted their informed oral consent after receiving oral information from our team on the objectives, risks and benefits of participating in this research. We applied this method following discussions on the use of oral informed consent in research with forced displaced populations to decrease the risks of confidentiality and privacy breaches (Hugman et al., 2011). Additionally, most participants could not read or write due to their limited access to education in Myanmar.

We adopted a purposive sampling methodology to allow a diversity of micronarratives (Ahmed, 2019) with the help of community-based organisations and Rohingya community leaders that previously worked with the researchers in Malaysia. A snowballing process complemented this recruitment methodology. Our research partner in Malaysia had previous experiences interviewing the Rohingya population in the country. The research team took detailed notes during the micronarrative data collection process, and later all the data were transcribed and translated into English by them. Participants choose the places where they felt more comfortable to talk with the researchers, which included their workplaces and houses. Most of the participants were male (36 out of 56), like the refugee population in Malaysia (UNHCR 2024). The female research leader collected the narratives of 20 Rohingya women.

The conversations lasted on average 45 min each and were conducted in the Rohingyan language without interpreters in the regions of Kuala Lumpur, Perlis, Kedah, and Penang in Malaysia (Fig. 2). Those places were selected because Kuala Lumpur and Penang are two big cities with more job opportunities. Perlis and Kedah are border areas with Thailand where many Rohingyas arrive. There were large Rohingya communities in those four regions. We did not perceive any differences in Rohingyas' reflections on resettlement considering age, place of living in Malaysia, and gender. We coded the data employing descriptive and focused coding (coding resettlement in general in the narratives) in the first cycle of coding using NVivo12 with the writing of coding memos (Saldaña, 2013). During the second cycle of coding, we employed values coding (to understand participants values, motifs and beliefs about resettlement) and pattern coding (to understand the themes that emerged when refugees reflected on resettlement) (Saldaña, 2013). The results reflect the main themes that emerged in Rohingyas'

Fig. 2 (a) Informal Rohingya settlements in Bukit Malut; and (b-d) Rohingya learning centre in Baitul Rahmah, Lankawi, Kedah, Malaysia.Source: Local partner in Malaysia, July 2019.

narratives to explain how they see their resettlement perspectives and the determinants for their preferences to go (or not) to a third country.

The Rohingya participants were on average 30 years old (some did not know their age because they were stateless and did not have birth registrations). Most of them were married, 19 singles (five women), two widows (one woman), and one man was divorced. Most Rohingyas were daily labourer (22, including one woman) or housemakers (11 women). The rest occupied low paid jobs, including working in factories, farms, cafeteria, restaurants, shops and cleaning. Some Rohingyas with more education (university - three people, high school – nine, and religious education - three) had better jobs working in community schools or shelters or volunteering with national and international NGOs (four of them). Rohingyas were living in Malaysia between a couple of months and 23 years by the time of the data collection. Most participants (38 out of 56) arrived in Malaysia after the violence in Myanmar in 2012; eight participants were living in Malaysia before 2012. Three participants went to Bangladesh as children, and three were born in Bangladesh.

All participants had an annual income lower than Malaysian nationals. According to the Average Salary Survey (2021), the average annual salary in Malaysia was US$29,740, and the most typical salary was US$12,000. Fifteen participants lived with less than 500 Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)[2] per month (US$120), eight received between 500 and 1,000 MYR (US$120 – US$240); 31 received between 1,000 and 2,000 MYR (US$240 – US$480) and two people living in the country for more than nine years received between 2,000 and 3,000 MYR (US$480 – US$720).

[2] 1 US dollar=4,1666 Malaysian Ringgit, as of May 24, 2021.

How do rohingyas in Malaysia perceive resettlement?

In general, most Rohingyas (47 out of 56, 84%) wanted resettlement in another country. Eleven of them (20%) had friends and family previously resettled in Canada, the USA, UK, and Australia. These were also the preferred countries that Rohingyas mentioned if they could choose where they wanted to be resettled. However, nine refugees (16%) did not want to be resettled, and only three of them (5%) wanted to be resettled in Muslim-majority countries. The following subsections explain the logics and determinants that affect Rohingyas' decisions on resettlement. Some participants were reserved about resettlement in Western countries, which is an interesting finding.

Narratives of rohingyas willing to be resettled in a third country

Rohingyas reflected on different determinants that are connected in their narratives to explain their decisions to be resettled. In general, the main one was having access to legal status/citizenship. The second one was getting access to education/a better future for their children. Other determinants were the legal right to work, access to medical treatment, the possibility to visit their families abroad, the precarious situation in Malaysia, and the information they received from their relatives and friends already resettled abroad. Access to rights, difficult situation in their transit country and information from resettled people affects Rohingyas' decisions on resettlement like presented in the literature. However, access to citizenship/legal status was the primary motivation for resettlement in Rohingyas' narratives.

The main motive for Rohingyas' willingness to be resettled is the perspective to have access to legal status and maybe citizenship that will grant them rights (including the right to education for their children and to work, for example). This perspective of access to rights appeared in the narratives of 34 Rohingyas (61%): 'I want to get citizenship, but I cannot get it in Malaysia. If I could be resettled in a third country, I would get citizenship and a legal status' (Rohingya man, 27 years old, 02/09/2019); 'I would like to settle in a suitable country where I can get citizenship in future' (Rohingya woman, 19 years old, 24/09/2019).

The second prominent theme that appeared in the micronarratives was a concern to give a better future (15 Rohingyas) and access to education (24 Rohingyas) for their children. It connects with this theme of legal status/citizenship. We perceive this reflection in the narratives of many Rohingyas: 'If I am resettled in a third country, my future will be good and my daughter will get citizenship too (Rohingya man, unknown age, 20/07/2019)'; 'if we go somewhere in Europe or America, we will be able to get a citizenship. This will enable me to send my son to school' (Rohingya man, 30 years old, 07/05/2019). Many Rohingyas were worried about the future of their children and saw resettlement in a third country as an opportunity to allow them better educational opportunities: 'I can send my kids to school if I am resettled in third country (Rohingya man, 35 years old, 14/07/2019); 'If my children do not have any country, it will be difficult for them to get a proper education. If we are resettled in a third country, my children can study in the future' (Rohingya woman, 25 years old, 30/08/2019); 'I want to go to Canada for my son's sake. I desperately want him to go to school and have a very good life so that we all can be proud of him' (Rohingya woman, 25 years old, 15/05/2019).

Rohingyas' narratives also connect resettlement with the future of their children and community: 'I think third country resettlement is good for our children's future'

(Rohingya woman, 23 years old, 18/08/2019); 'People choose for resettlement because of their children's future and education.' (Rohingya man, 54 years old, 14/07/2019); Resettlement is good for us. Since I have a son, it would be good for his future' (Rohingya woman, 27 years old, 28/07/2019).

Rohingyas are also willing to be resettled to continue their education in the resettlement country they could not do in Malaysia: 'If I can go to Canada, it will help me to fulfil my dream because I can go to school' (Rohingya man, 20 years old, 07/06/2019); 'If I have legal status, I can continue my studies. I am still eager to become a university teacher if I am resettled in a third country' (Rohingya woman, 27 years old, 28/07/2019). They are also looking for the possibility to have a legal right to work: 'If I am resettled in a third country, I will become a citizen of that country. I will have a legal status and I will be able to work freely' (Rohingya man, 33 years old, 30/09/2019); 'if we can have legal status from any other country, I can stay legally with my family' (Rohingya man, 30 years old, 07/05/2019).

Another theme connected with getting legal status in the resettlement country is the possibility of visiting their families that live abroad. Some Rohingyas explained: 'If I can get citizenship of a third country, then I may have a chance to see my family in Bangladesh one day' (Rohingya woman, 18 years old, 24/09/2019); 'I am still willing to go to America or Canada. I want citizenship so that I can go back to Bangladesh and meet with my parents and my children' (Rohingya man, 29 years old, 18/06/2019). Resettlement could also be a manner to reunite families, as reflected by this Rohingya man: 'UN third country resettlement in Malaysia is good for a refugee who has spent many years here. Since my family members have been resettled in a third country, I am willing to be reunited with them" (35 years old, 14/07/2019).

The precarious situation in Malaysia also motivated the Rohingya refugees to be resettled in a third country. Refugees reflected that life in Malaysia was hard because they could not send their kids to school, and they faced the risk of being arrested: 'There is no legal status, and it is hard to survive here with my kids' (Rohingya woman, 27 years old, 26/07/2019); 'I would like to be resettled to a third country because Malaysia is not quite safe for me. I was recently arrested, even having my UN card. That is why I do not want to stay here' (Rohingya man, 33 years old, 30/09/2019); 'As Malaysia is not a signatory, we will never get any right to become citizens in Malaysia. So, people are trying to go to Europe or other countries for resettlement through UNHCR' (Rohingya man, 26 years old, 25/06/2019).

Rohingyas reflected that they do not have proper access to healthcare in Malaysia. Two of them wanted to be resettled to have access to better healthcare for themselves and their families: 'We are interested in going to a third country as we are elders and we have some medical condition' (Rohingya woman, 65 years old, 27/07/2019); 'I do not have any choices to resettle in a country, but I am looking for a country that can provide better medical opportunities for my daughter and education for my children' (Rohingya man, 52 years old, July 2019).

Information from resettled people affects Rohingyas' opinion on resettlement. Rohingyas are also considering how they perceived the situation of people that were already resettled: 'I know few Rohingya who went to Canada, Australia, America, and now they are living a very good life there with their family' (Rohingya man, 20 years old, 07/06/2019); 'Actually many people went to America, Canada, Australia and other

countries under this program. Even I personally know some of them who went abroad, and at one point, they will get citizenship from that country' (Rohingya woman, 22 years old, 16/06/2019). Rohingyas wanted to be resettled in places where they had a network that could support them: 'If UN asks me, I can go to London (in the UK) or Australia. Because we have our Rohingya community in both these places' (Rohingya man, 24 years old, 07/06/2019); 'If UNHCR offers me for a third country resettlement program, I would prefer Australia. Because there are few Rohingyas from my village who are now residing in Australia' (Rohingya man, 26 years old, 07/06/2019).

Some refugees saw resettlement as a temporary solution because they would prefer to return to Myanmar: 'What I understand about the UN third country resettlement program is, it is a good initiative to help the Rohingya for a certain period' (Rohingya man, 24 years old, 07/06/2019). Finally, some participants perceived resettlement as a last option because they could not return to Myanmar: 'I am interested in settling in a third country because I cannot go back to Myanmar right now.' (Rohingya woman, unknown age, 21/09/2019); 'The UN third country resettlement sounds good. If I can be resettled to a third country, I would like to be resettled. If I can go back home safely, I would like to go back home' (Rohingya man, 23 years old, 08/09/2019). The reflection of this Rohingya man (07/05/2019) summarises the different determinants in Rohingyas' decision for resettlement:

> *When I see that I won't get back to my country in the near future and if I stay in Malaysia, my son will have no future. He will grow up here without an identity or citizenship rights. When I see that I can't send him to any school and I won't be able to meet my family again, then I decided to apply to UNHCR for third country resettlement as a last resort.*

Overall, the Rohingyas' perception to resettlement is dominated by their desire to get citizenship in a third country, where they can enjoy the basic human rights. The possibility of getting legal status and/or citizenship is essential to Rohingyas because they are a stateless population. They are not recognised as citizens of Myanmar, and they also have no possibilities to become Malaysian citizens. Getting legal status/citizenship is also connected with guaranteeing a better future for their children, the possibility to visit their families abroad, getting access to healthcare services, and having a legal right to work and continuing their education. A few of them wanted to resettlement in a country where there is an existing Rohingya diaspora that links to networks and community feelings. Some Rohingyas expressed their desire to return to Myanmar when the situation would be favourable for their peaceful and dignified living.

Narratives of rohingyas against and reserves about resettlement

In general, only 16% of the Rohingya respondents did not want to resettle in a third country. Different reasons affected the decision of Rohingyas on not to being resettled. Most Rohingyas did not want to be resettled because they expected to return to Myanmar: 'I know there is a program initiated by UN. But I don't have any interest to go anywhere. If I can go anywhere from Malaysia, I will definitely go to Burma' (Rohingya man, 25 years old, 13/05/2019); 'I don't see anything good in UN third country resettlement program. Why will they take me to another country instead of my own country?' (Rohingya man, 35 years old, 25/06/2019); 'The UN third country resettlement program is good for many

Rohingya. But I am not interested in this program because I want my own country back' (Rohingya man, 69 years old, 07/05/2019); 'None of the countries are better than my home country. I love my country' (Rohingya man, 18 years old, July 2019).

Rohingyas also did not want to be resettled because they wanted to be reunited with their families: 'As for me, I am not willing to be resettled because I want to reunite with my family one day' (Rohingya man, 54 years old, 14/07/2019); 'I just want to go back home. I want to enjoy living with my parents, my family members and my villagers in my homeland' (Rohingya man, 27 years old, 10/08/2019)). They feared discrimination in the third country: 'Even if we are chosen to go to another country for resettlement, we will face the same discrimination because they will look at us as a foreigner that resides in their land' (Rohingya man, 37 years old, July 2019); and they feared not being able to integrate ('I don't have any interest to go to Canada or America. Because I have no education, I don't know the language, so how can I live there?' (Rohingya man, 25 years old, 13/05/2019).

A few of the Rohingya respondents (5%) discussed the impact of religion on choosing a country of asylum/resettlement. For example, some resettlement countries were perceived as Christian countries, and refugees did not want to live there. This 36-year old Rohingya man reflected how he did not want to raise his kids in a Christian country:

> *I am not interested because I heard some negative things about those countries. For example, I heard they teach Christianity in their textbook in school. But I do not want my children to get those lessons from Christianity (20/06/2019).*

Another Rohingya refugee (52 years old, 07/07/2019) reflected on that to explain his decision only to accept to be resettled in a Muslim country:

> *I know some Rohingya who already went to Western countries through UNHCR but all of those are Christian dominated countries. That is why I will not go there. I already had a terrible experience with the Buddhist in my own country, that is why I do not want to take any risk to go to a new country.*

Two other Rohingyas wanted to be resettled in Muslim countries: 'I wish to go to a third country, but I always prefer an Islamic country. As those Western countries are not Islamic, so I do not feel comfortable to go there' (Rohingya man, 28 years old, 15/05/2019); 'If UNHCR can send me to another Muslim country like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, or Egypt, then I am willing to go' (Rohingya man, 28 years old, 16/05/2019).

Finally, in two cases, husband and wife had different opinions on resettlement. This was the case of this Rohingya man that did not want to be resettled, but his wife wanted to go to Canada: 'I prefer not to send my kids to those countries. But my wife is very interested in going to Canada because she got a friend there (Rohingya man, 36 years old, 20/06/2019)'. That was also the situation of this 21-year old Rohingya woman (July 2019) who wanted to be resettled. However, her husband was integrated in Malaysia and did not want to leave the country:

> *When I asked my husband about resettlement in another country, he said to me: "No! Impossible!" He can speak the native Malay language here. So sometimes people assume him as a Malaysian. […] I envy my friends when I see them being offered by the UN to resettle in a third country. Sometimes I imagine myself in a more beautiful and more peaceful place.*

We see different logics to understand Rohingyas' choices of not being resettled. While the desire for return and fear to be away from the family appeared in the few studies that considered refugees that did not want resettlement, the role of religion and the fear of being discriminated against in a Western country do not appear in the literature. The particularities of the Rohingya situation, including the persecution they suffered in Myanmar both in the hands of the Myanmar Army and the Buddhist extremists/Rakhines (Uddin, 2024b), should be considered in the design of resettlement programs for this population.

Sustainable solutions for the Rohingya crisis: a grim future awaits

From our qualitative micronarrative analysis of 56 Rohingyas in Malaysia, we identified four thematic areas regarding their perceptions on resettlement in a third country: (a) the majority wish to resettle; (b) their desire to resettle is primarily driven by the pursuit of full legal and citizenship rights, similar to those of host-nation citizens; (c) some are reluctant to leave Malaysia; and (d) only a few prefer to resettle in a Muslim-majority country. These findings align with Rohingya narratives from other studies, which also demand similar facilities (Ahmed et al. 2019, Uddin, 2024a). For instance, Rohingyas in Bangladesh have articulated four major demands for sustainable repatriation to Myanmar: (a) cessation of all forms of atrocities, violence, and oppression, including movement restrictions, religious freedom violations, and sexual violence; (b) assurance of citizenship and fundamental civic rights, including Rohingya identity recognition, land ownership, and rights to marriage and property without tortures; (c) access to community services such as education, health, sanitation, and drinking water; and (d) justice for genocide committed against them (Ahmed et al. 2019). As a stateless population, Rohingyas have never enjoyed full-fledged citizenship rights in their homeland in Myanmar nor in any asylum countries like in Bangladesh, Malaysia, India, or Indonesia. Rohingyas have always led a 'subhuman life' as coined by Uddin (2020), they have endured genocide and serious human rights violations in Myanmar and faced discrimination and neglect in asylum or transit countries. Thus, acquiring citizenship rights is identified as a primary attraction for any resettlement initiative. In this context, resettlement is viewed by Rohingyas as a crucial means to escape compromised living conditions and gain access to fundamental human rights in asylum or transit countries.

The role of religion in the resettlement decisions of Rohingyas is profound yet varies among the group, with a fraction specifically seeking refuge in Muslim-majority countries to avoid cultural and religious barriers. This inclination is deeply rooted in the historical interactions between the Muslim-majority Chittagong division of Bangladesh and the Buddhist-majority Rakhine State of Myanmar, which share international boundaries. Both regions were historically governed together during various periods, such as the Arakan Kingdom in the 16th century and later the British empire. These administrative overlaps facilitated ethno-religious mingling and movement across what became two postcolonial states, influencing the current demographics where over one million Buddhist live in the Chittagong division, and approx. one million Muslim Rohingya reside as IDPs in Myanmar (Leider, 2018).

The term 'Rohingya' emerged in the early 1950s, coined by Muslim leaders and students to establish a distinct ethno-religious identity, paralleling to their Buddhist counterparts, the Rakhines/Arakanese. This was part of an effort to unify Muslim

communities in Northern Rakhine. However, the Myanmar Army, or Tatmadaw, which holds significant power and runs the country, has never recognised the Rohingyas as citizens. Instead, they are derogatorily labelled as illegal Bengalis, purportedly migrants who moved to Rakhine during the British colonial rule (1824–1948) for agricultural work and day-labourer purposes (Uddin, 2020). While Rohingyas enjoyed certain rights such as land ownership and other civic facilities under the British governance, since Burma's independence in 1948, they have faced systematic discrimination and ethno-cultural tensions, exacerbated by state policies and military actions (Leider, 2018).

The Rohingyas are acutely aware of the harsh treatment they receive in some host countries, such as India, where they face significant discrimination, economic insecurity, exploitation, and marginalisation due to their religious identity (Field et al., 2020; Nair, 2022). Religion provides a sense of community and identity for the Rohingyas (Leider, 2018). This perspective is not merely about seeking safety; it is about finding a new home where their religious and cultural identities are respected and preserved. This view has developed among the Rohingyas through their experiences of everlasting inter-communal conflicts with the local Rakhines, rooted in historical Buddhist-Muslim tensions in Myanmar (Ibrahim, 2016). Moreover, devout Rohingyas, adhering strictly to Muslim traditions, fear that resettling in a non-Muslim country might threaten their Rohingya cultural and religious identity.

Rohingya refugees continue to face multifaceted challenges in their homeland in Myanmar and other asylum or transit countries. For example, in 2015, almost 140 mass grave sites of Rohingya were discovered in human trafficking camps deep within the jungles along the Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia borders, indicating hundreds of deaths (The Guardian, 2015). In Myanmar, they endure ongoing genocide, persecution, and systematic discrimination. Since the declaration of a State of Emergency in February 2021, the Tatmadaw has escalated systematic violence against their own civilians, resulting in over 4,000 deaths and widespread human rights violations (OCHA, 2023). Additionally, conflict-induced violence involving ethnic groups, civilian forces and the Tatmadaw has led to mass displacements. Currently over 2.6 million people displaced, and 18.6 million people require urgent humanitarian assistance in Myanmar (OCHA, 2023). Moreover, the IDP camps and Rohingya villages are vulnerable to floods and cyclones, complicating the situation further (OCHA, 2023). Given these dire conditions, a voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return for the Rohingyas to Myanmar is nearly impossible.

Rohingyas face precarious challenges in their asylum countries. For instance, in the Kutupalong Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, they contend with catastrophic hydrometeorological disasters such as cyclones, landslides, and floods (Ahmed, 2021), along with a surge of criminal activities. The influx of Rohingya into Cox's Bazar has also significantly impacted local socio-economic conditions, environmental degradation, and security, creating increased tensions with host communities (Islam et al., 2022). Moreover, the UN and its partners are experiencing an acute funding crisis, with a 50–60% shortfall each year, which has forced them to reduce food supplies and other basic necessities (UNHCR, 2024a).

To address the failed repatriation attempt, anti-Rohingya local pressures, extreme overcrowding, and catastrophic disasters, the GoB has relocated over 35,000 Rohingyas to a remote silted-up island in the Bay of Bengal, approximately 153 km away from

the mainland camps in Cox's Bazar (UNHCR, 2024a; Uddin, 2024a). Known locally as Bhasan Char, is deemed physically stable in terms of its structure, morphology, size, shoreline change, and resistance to inundation from cyclones and storm surges (Gazi et al., 2022). Although, the island was newly formed and did not exist before 2018 (Fig. 3a, b), it has been equipped with various facilities such as embankments, emergency shelters, wave bankers, modern housing, and community facilities–including schools, mosques, a lighthouse, health centres, a mobile phone network, and playgrounds. These developments, along with ample livelihood training and opportunities (Fig. 3d-f), aim to make the island more appealing and temporarily liveable for the Rohingyas (Islam et al., 2021). Despite these modern amenities, the Rohingyas remain reluctant to relocate to Bhasan Char due to fears of isolation, natural disasters, and mistrust (Uddin, 2024a). They perceive it as an open prison, and many have attempted to escape the island using dangerous sea routes to Malaysia and Indonesia (Fig. 1). Estimates indicate that one in every eight Rohingya who undertook this perilous journey died or went missing, making it one of the deadliest illegal migrations routes in the world. In 2023 alone, over 4,500 Rohingyas embarked on this journey from Bangladesh and Myanmar (UNHCR, 2023b),

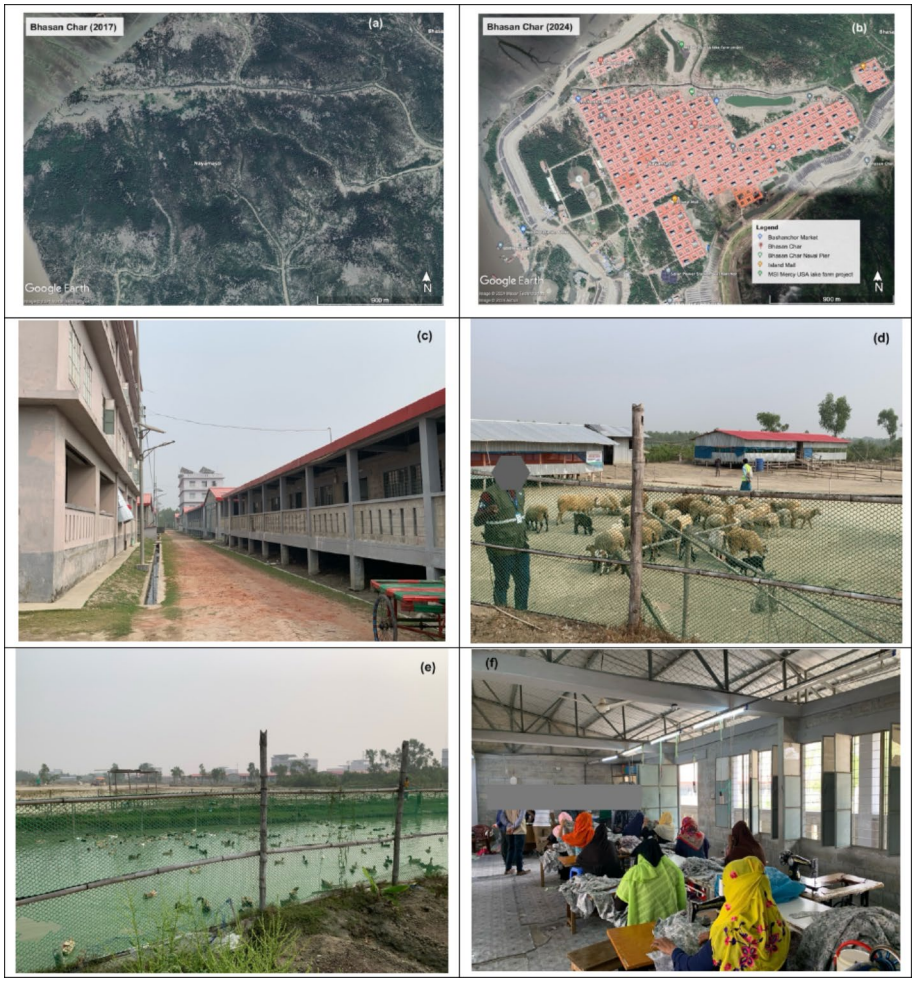

Fig. 3 The evolution of the Bhasan Char Island, Noakhali, Bangladesh, between (a) 2017 and (b) 2024 [Source: Google Earth]; and (c) a typical housing unit; and (d-f) various types of livelihood activities on the island. Source: Field photographs, Bayes Ahmed, January 2023

a number that far exceeds the amount promised for Rohingya resettlement, with no successful repatriation yet achieved.

In summary, Rohingyas face grim uncertainties both in their homeland in Myanmar and in their host/asylum countries. The four potential solutions for ensuring their safety–local integration, relocation, repatriation, and resettlement–are mired in precarious circumstances. Due to their statelessness or religious identity, it appears that Rohingyas are neither safe nor fully enjoying fundamental human rights anywhere in the world. While they themselves perceive a return to Rakhine State as the most sustainable solution, ongoing civil war and conflict in Myanmar do not offer a favourable environment for this. Consequently, Rohingyas are compelled to undertake dangerous sea and land journeys in search of safer havens (Fig. 1).

The Rohingya often do not understand technical terminologies such as 'resettlement', but they consistently emphasize the need for safety, security, and a justice-based society where they can live peacefully and with dignity, not as subhuman (Uddin, 2020). Although the majority of Rohingyas desire resettlement, in reality, it remains an impractical option. The UNHCR projects that approximately 2.9 million refugees worldwide, including 119,300 Rohingyas, will need resettlement by 2025. Yet historically, less than 1% of refugees are resettled annually (UNHCR, 2024c). This scenario is particularly evident for the Rohingyas as only a handful of developed countries are willing to accept them, and only in very small numbers. For instance, In 2009, only 78 Rohingya refugees were resettled in Ireland from the camps in Bangladesh (Cawley et al. 2022). Between 2013 and 2019, only 152 Rohingya youth were resettled in the USA (Evans et al., 2023). At the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, the US declared that they had welcomed over 1,200 Rohingyas between December 2023 to March 2024, with plans to increase these numbers (U.S. Mission in Geneva, 2024). However, these figures represent merely a tiny fraction of the larger crisis.

To address the Rohingya humanitarian crisis effectively, it is crucial for relevant governments, the UN, and other national and international agencies to commit increasing the number of Rohingyas resettled, enhance funding to support Rohingyas in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Malaysia, and other countries, and develop a long-term, sustainable solutions for their return to Myanmar.

Conclusion

In this article, Rohingyas living in Malaysia have reflected on their perspectives regarding resettlement. Our study revealed that their perceptions of resettlement are influenced by several factors: the experiences of those previously resettled, the conditions in the transit countries, and the potential for accessing rights in resettlement countries. These factors have also shaped refugees' decisions on resettlement in different contexts, consistent with the literature. Notably, their status as a stateless minority primarily directs their decisions towards securing legal status or citizenship. Ensuring a better future for their children emerges as the second major reason for resettlement, closely tied to the acquisition of citizenship, given that Rohingya children born in Malaysia are also stateless. Interestingly, our findings did not indicate that higher salaries or improved economic conditions in resettlement countries were significant factors in their decision-making processes.

Another important consideration is that Rohingyas view resettlement as a temporary solution because they cannot return to their native land. They prefer to return to Myanmar, seeing it as their most durable solution; however, the current conditions there make this impossible, pushing resettlement to their last choice rather than a preferred option. The prospect of being far from family members in Bangladesh and/or Myanmar also deters them from resettling. While some studies have explored why some refugees resist resettlement, they often overlook the influence of religious beliefs, the fear of discrimination and persecution, and the challenges of integration in third countries. In fact, many Rohingyas, persecuted in Myanmar due to their Muslim identity, flee to Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia and prefer resettlement in similar countries to avoid discrimination. This observation helps to clarify the role of religion in resettlement decisions and challenges the assumption that all refugees aim to resettle in Global North countries. In the future, the UNHCR could also consider engaging other Muslim-majority countries in resettlement programs.

Author contributions

Patrícia Nabuco Martuscelli conceptualised and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Bayes Ahmed contributed to writing and revising the manuscript and was responsible for the overall management of the project, including data standardisation and collection. Peter Sammonds served as the Principal Investigator of the project. All authors reviewed and agreed on the manuscript's content.

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Declaration

Conflict of interest

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest. We assure you that the manuscript has not been submitted for publication elsewhere.

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