



NGO Committee on Migration

Side Event to the 56th Commission for Social Development

Conflict and Poverty: The Case of the Rohingya

Monday, 5 February, 3:00pm - 4:30pm

United Nations Headquarters, New York, Conference Room D

SPEAKERS

Arjun Jain

Senior Policy Advisor (Humanitarian and Emergencies), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)

Myra Dahgaypaw

Policy advocate, U.S. Campaign for Burma

Paul Adem Carroll

Director, New York Office, Burma Task Force USA, together with Khadijah Mehter, Burmese Muslim student and organizer

Moderator:

Eva Richter

UN NGO Representative, Poverty Elimination and Community Education Foundation; NGO Committee on Migration



CONCEPT NOTE

Conflict and Poverty: The Case of the Rohingya

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The recent mass exodus from Rakhine State in Myanmar of over 640,000 Rohingya Muslims into neighboring Bangladesh, 60% of them women and children, has created appalling conditions, both at home and abroad. Additional thousands have scattered over several neighboring countries, including Malaysia and Thailand, many of them drowning in the Andaman Sea in their search for safety. The intersection of long-standing ethnic tensions and xenophobia, poverty and violent conflict has created a crisis of human misery that has shocked the world. It is further complicated by issues of citizenship, religious division, and security on both sides, escalating the situation into a human tragedy of unprecedented proportions.

Resolving the immediate chaos and planning for a restoration of order which would reintegrate the refugees into a stable society is imperative. It will take massive effort on the part of all stakeholders, including the affected governments, UN agencies, members of civil society, and, most importantly, the refugees themselves and those to whom they will return, seeking to live productive lives in peace and harmony.

The effort of reintegration of refugees into society has to include the elimination of poverty and increased opportunities for productive work. Due to ongoing conflict and xenophobia the vast majority of these forced migrants are poor today and expected to be poor in the future. Research shows that the average time for the process of displacement and relocation is approximately 25 years, during which time forced migrants face harsh forms of poverty as a result of displacement. In addition, relocation accompanied by a lack of integration is directly related to dire poverty among relocated families.

Poverty for families takes the form of economic and psychosocial losses including the loss of home, safety and security, loss of social role and status, culture and community. The most affected are children, too often relegated to the fringes of policy debates which render their poverty invisible. Poverty disrupts children's needs and crucial developmental processes and can be passed down through the generations. Children face particular challenges and too many losses: of one or both parents, extended family members and friends; of home, childhood and normalcy; of learning and school attendance; of cultural identity and social integration; of hope and expectations for the future. An environment of dislocation, unpredictability, and violence causes the kind of developmental deprivation that results in a wide range of cognitive, emotional and behavioral problems. Children, including girls and young women, are also at greater risk of exploitation, trafficking, and violence.

Constituent members of the NGO Committee on Migration, The Poverty Elimination and Community Education (PEACE) Foundation, the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), the International Presentation Association, and the Congregation of St. Joseph will present a panel of experts who will seek to understand the situation in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, addressing especially issues of poverty, education, and productive work, and paying attention to the most vulnerable members of society - its women and children -- with the goal of overcoming long-standing xenophobia and leaving no one behind.