

## The Plight of the Rohingyas: Design Guidelines to Accommodate Displaced People in Bangladesh

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**Abstract :** The sensitive issue of a large-scale entry of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh has arisen again since August of 2017. Incited by ethnic and religious conflict, the Rohingyas—an ethnic group concentrated in the north-west state of Rakhine in Myanmar—have been fleeing to what is now Bangladesh from as early as the late 1700s in four main exoduses. This long-standing persecution has recently escalated, and accommodating the recent wave of exodus has been especially challenging due to the sheer volume of a million refugees concentrated in refugee camps in two small administrative units (upazilas) in the south-east of the country: the host area. This drastic change in the host area's social fabric is putting a lot of strain on the country's economic, demographic and environmental stability, and security. Although Bangladesh's long-term experience with disaster management has enabled it to respond rapidly to the crisis, the government is failing to cope with this enormous problem and has taken insufficient steps towards improving the living conditions to inhibit the inflow of more refugees. On top of that, the absence of a comprehensive national refugee policy, and the density of the structures of the camps are constricting the upgrading of the shelters to international standards. As of December 2016, the combined number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict and violence (stock), and new displacements due to disasters (flow) in Bangladesh had exceeded 1 million. These numbers have increased dramatically in the last few months. Moreover, by 2050, Bangladesh will have as much as 25 million climate refugees just from its coastal districts. To enhance the resilience of the vulnerable, it is crucial to methodically factorize further interventions between Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience (DRR) and the concept of Building Back Better (BBB) in the rehabilitation-reconstruction period. Considering these points, this paper provides a palette of options for design guidelines related to the living spaces and infrastructures for refugees. This will encourage the development of national standards for refugee camps, and the national and local level rehabilitation-reconstruction practices. Unhygienic living conditions, vulnerability, and the general lack of control over life are pervasive throughout the camps. This paper, therefore, proposes site-specific strategic and physical planning and design for shelters for refugees in Bangladesh that will lead to sustainable living environments through the following: a) site survey of existing two registered and one makeshift unregistered refugee camps to document and study their physical conditions, b) questionnaires and semi-structured focus group discussions carried out among the refugees and stakeholders to understand what the lived experiences and needs are; and c) combining the findings with international minimum standards for shelter and settlement from International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These proposals include temporary shelter solutions that balance between lived spaces and regimented, repetitive plans using readily available and cheap materials, erosion control and slope stabilization strategies, and most importantly, coping mechanisms for the refugees to be self-reliant and resilient.

**Keywords :** architecture, Bangladesh, refugee camp, resilience, Rohingya

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