

# Collaborative Development for Migrants: Empowering Rohingya and Bangladeshi Communities in India

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## Abstract

This study explores the development challenges faced by Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants in India, who are driven by persecution, poverty, and limited opportunities in their home countries. These migrants experience significant socio-economic hardships while living in vulnerable conditions, both in their countries of origin and in India.

The research examines the Collaborative Welfare Model for Immigrants, which includes conducting a detailed census, issuing identity cards, and fostering coordination with the migrants' home countries to address broader development needs. By prioritizing human dignity over legal status, this model advocates for inclusive policies that involve all relevant stakeholders, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to create pathways for migrant integration, economic empowerment, and social cohesion.

Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the study evaluates the impact of current development initiatives and the role of diverse stakeholders in supporting migrant communities. The study concludes with policy recommendations emphasizing the need for targeted programs, legal protections, and international cooperation to ensure sustainable development for migrants and refugees, with equal participation from all sectors to achieve positive outcomes for all parties involved.

**Keywords:** Persecution, Rohingya, Bangladeshi immigrants, NGOs, Collaborative Welfare Model.

## 1. Introduction

The essential step toward a world where people fleeing war, persecution, and poverty no longer need to risk their lives on overcrowded boats, navigate razor wire border fences, or fall victim to human traffickers is the establishment of safe and legal migration pathways. These pathways must meet the protection needs of refugees while addressing the labor needs of host countries. In the context of India, migration from South Asia, particularly of Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants, presents complex challenges that require a compassionate and strategic response.

Though far from perfect, the Biden administration took significant steps to establish safer, legal migration pathways, including innovations like "safe mobility offices" in South and Central America and the CBP-One application for orderly asylum appointments. These initiatives led to a decrease in irregular border crossings as safe and regular pathways expanded. However, under President Donald Trump, a series of executive orders effectively dismantled many of these programs, including suspending refugee

resettlement and revoking the policies that sought to provide safe processing for asylum seekers. The end of such programs signals a retreat from US leadership in global migration governance, potentially leaving vulnerable populations without secure, lawful avenues for seeking refuge.

In India, addressing the educational, social, and economic integration of migrants is a critical aspect of creating such pathways. Education remains the cornerstone of successful integration, fostering inclusion and social cohesion for marginalized communities. This research explores the role of education in the inclusion of South Asian migrants in India, highlighting the need for community-based educational programs, vocational training, and skill development to empower migrants, improve their living conditions, and contribute to a more inclusive society. Through collaborative efforts with international organizations and local communities, India can build a more sustainable, humane approach to migration, ensuring a brighter future for migrants and host communities alike. Two of the most marginalized groups among the various migrant populations in this region are Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants located in India. They struggle against numerous odds on their quest for a secure and stable life. This paper investigates the educational prospects and integration mechanisms for these vulnerable groups located in India, delving into how education being instrumental in their social assimilation and empowerment should be tailored to suit their needs.

The Rohingya are one of the most vulnerable communities of the world who are facing internal and external instability throughout their lifetime. They have faced discrimination and violence since 1948 when Myanmar gained independence. The Rohingya have been denied citizenship under the Burmese Citizenship Law of 1982 which has left them out of all rights available to citizens, an institutionalized exclusion that has led to various atrocities on their community making many other people leave Myanmar for India and other neighboring countries. The Rohingya have been spread over different states in India after the 2012 Rakhine State riots including Jammu and Kashmir plus Delhi, Uttar Pradesh. The Indians have not shown any kindness for their miserable situation and the government is unwilling to acknowledge them as refugees; they term them as illegal immigrants, and in that case they do not enjoy legal protection or other rights.

The situation of Bangladeshi migrants in India is not much different. They grapple with big challenges and their living conditions are often hanging by a thread without basic services being available. In fact, both these communities deal with statelessness issues that deprive them of any legal identity or rights, impeding drastically their capability to reach education, health care or job opportunities. These broader issue of statelessness and the socio-economic inclusion in South Asia is a topic not dealt with in existing literature.

In the field of stateless communities, Notable works, such as "State of Being Stateless in South Asia" edited by Paula Banerjee et al., and Deepak K. Singh's "Stateless in South Asia," shed light on other stateless communities but do not sufficiently address the specific plight of Rohingya in India. By examining the accessibility and efficacy of educational opportunities for Bangladeshis and Rohingyas in India, as well as offering policy suggestions that can improve their inclusion in education, this article aims to close this gap. Education is a vital component of society and a fundamental human right. The 1951 Refugee treaty stipulates that refugees must be granted a variety of rights, including freedom of religion, the right to work, and the right to an education also. Nevertheless, India has not ratified this treaty. In spite of this duty, the Indian government has adopted a discriminatory policy toward Rohingya refugees, resulting in their expulsion; this move further marginalizes them and increases the likelihood of human rights abuses. This paper is set on a stage of the global migration crises with such catastrophic events as the

Vietnamese boat exodus and the Mediterranean refugee crisis as examples. On their flights to these migrants' lives it becomes quite clear than now more than ever sustainable and humane solutions are required. This research specifically analyses how education helps to prevent statelessness, and encourages inclusion in India through integration of newcomers into mainstream society and empowerment in highly fractured post-colonial socio-political system.

The study employs a qualitative approach to explore challenges experienced by Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants living in India. An objective is to show that how collaborative approaches can play a key role in ensuring that marginalized communities do not get excluded from a decent, secure life and instead assists them to improve their position within society.

## **2. Causes of rising immigrants to India from South Asia**

1. **Political and Economic Instability:** Ongoing political and economic turmoil in Bangladesh and Myanmar has contributed to significant migration to India. The Bangladesh Liberation War caused millions of Bangladeshis to seek refuge in India, and the continuing instability in the region has led to persistent migration. In Myanmar, the Rohingya, a persecuted ethnic group, have fled ongoing state violence and human rights abuses.
2. **Ethnic and Religious Persecution:** Ethnic and religious minorities, including Hindus in Bangladesh and the Rohingya in Myanmar, have faced systematic persecution. This has driven many to seek asylum in India, where they hope to escape violence and discrimination.
3. **Natural Disasters and Environmental Challenges:** Bangladesh is highly prone to natural disasters like cyclones, floods, and river erosion. These environmental challenges often displace large populations, pushing people to migrate to India in search of safety and livelihood opportunities, further compounded by the country's economic struggles.
4. **Economic Hardship and Unemployment:** High levels of poverty and unemployment across South Asia push many individuals and families to migrate to India in search of better economic prospects. India's larger, more diversified economy presents opportunities for those seeking to improve their living standards and escape economic hardship.
5. **India's Growing Global Influence:** India's expanding economy and rising geopolitical importance have made it an attractive destination for migrants seeking stability, security, and better opportunities. The perception of India as a land of opportunity has increased, drawing people from neighboring countries who hope to benefit from its economic growth and improving infrastructure.
6. **Internal Migration Misinterpreted as Immigration:** Some internal migration within India, particularly from northeastern states like Assam, has been misattributed to illegal immigration from Bangladesh. This confusion between internal and cross-border migration has led to misperceptions about the scale and causes of migration.
7. **Socio-Political Context and Legal Definitions:** The Assam Accord, which defines illegal migrants as those entering after December 24, 1971, targets post-war migrants from Bangladesh. This socio-political framework influences the region's policies and perceptions regarding immigration, especially in the context of migration from Bangladesh.
8. **Government Policies and Deportation Efforts:** The Indian government, especially under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has taken a firm stance on deporting illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas whom they regard as a security threat. The Supreme Court has supported these deportation policies. However, legal migration for refuge remains possible, and India continues to attract migrants seeking safety and

better opportunities through legal channels.

### 3. Socio-economic condition of immigrants in India

South Asian migrants are one of the most vulnerable community of India as they face many problems like-

- Absence of permanent settlement they reside in informal settlements like slum, tin houses, hut etc. with overcrowded and lack of facilities are infrastructure like water sanitation health care facilities education facilities making them more prone to social and health issue.
- Lack of employment opportunities makes them work in informal sectors with low paid and labor intensive jobs like construction activities, domestic labor and waste collection hence they are more prone to exploitation, lower wages and poor working conditions which worsened the situation.
- Lack of formal education system as they lack proper education due to financial issues and lack of legal documents which makes their future more dark.
- Lack of healthcare facilities due to lack of proper documents they cannot use government established hospitals and cannot take the benefit of government programs like Ayushman Bharat due to which they totally rely on local clinics or fake doctors which make them more prone to other issues.
- Lack of social security due to constant threat of detention and deportation due to lack of legal documents of citizenship present with them.
- High rate of discrimination and marginalization due to cultural differences and stigma associated with undocumented status of the migrants hampers their inclusion with the indigenous community and also creates conflict between them.
- High rate of exploitation by landlords, employers and even law enforcement agencies due to non availability of the proper documents and constant fear of deportation hamper their quality of life.
- Lack of access of public services like the welfare schemes of the government related to health facilities, education facilities, and etc are not available to them as they are not legal citizens of the country
- They are more prone to natural disasters like tsunamis, flood, heat waves, thunderstorm cloudburst etc due to non availability of proper settlement and proper proofing of the houses result in more effect on them on mental and physical status of their well being.

### 4. India's Approach to Rohingya Refugees and Bangladeshi Migrants under the Narendra Modi Government

- a. National Security Priorities:** Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Indian government has placed a strong emphasis on national security regarding the presence of Rohingya refugees. The government has raised concerns about their illegal entry and stay, leading to efforts for their deportation back to Myanmar. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 offers non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, who entered India before December 31, 2014, the chance to apply for citizenship. However, the law excludes Muslims, prompting significant criticism for its perceived bias and selective nature.
- b. Legal Framework:** India has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol, meaning it is not bound by international standards for refugee protection. This allows the Indian government to handle asylum and refugee recognition as domestic issues, free from international obligations. Under the Narendra Modi government, Rohingya refugees have been detained under the Foreigners Act for violating immigration laws, reflecting India's strict enforcement of its immigration policies.
- c. Demographic and Political Considerations:** The Modi's administration stresses the importance of

prioritizing the needs of Indian citizens, pointing to India's large population and its status as a developing nation. Critics of the CAA argue that the exclusion of Muslims reflects an agenda to alter India's demographic makeup, favoring non-Muslim groups.

- d. Education and Opportunities for Migrants:** Despite its firm stance on illegal immigration and national security, India could explore ways to provide education and opportunities to migrants, including Rohingya refugees. However, this would need to be balanced with the country's broader policy goals and national interests.

## 5. Possible solution for the betterment of the immigrants

**Community-Based Education Programs:** Establishing community schools within refugee camps or settlements that cater specifically to migrant children that will increase their economic participation, social integration with the locals, less discrimination, better quality of life, more civic involvement and reduction in chain of poverty. Leveraging NGOs and international aid organizations to fund and operate these educational facilities.

**Vocational Training and Skill Development:** Implementing vocational training programs to equip migrants with skills that can help them become self-reliant. Collaboration with international agencies to provide resources and trainers for these programs.

**Health and Sanitation Initiatives:** Ensuring access to basic healthcare and sanitation in refugee camps to improve living conditions. Regular health camps and awareness programs to prevent disease outbreaks and promote hygiene. Educational initiative like Scholarship and financial aid with the help of their native country will help them to empower themselves educationally and economically with the collaboration of both the countries. And inclusive school policy like anti bullying policies and flexible education like online and evening classes, mobile schools will help the poor slum migrant community to get formal education effectively.

**Legal Aid and Documentation:** Providing legal assistance to help migrants understand and navigate India's legal framework. Facilitating documentation processes to ensure they have access to basic services and rights.

**Signing MOUs with the native countries** of the migrant communities and financial collaboration with them to providing microfinance to the migrant community for entrepreneurship programs and educational development.

**Collaborating with the NGOs, civil society and volunteer communities** like tutors and mentors will help in providing migrants community aid without much burden on the state.

**Partnership with International Organizations:** Partnering with the United Nations and other international bodies to secure funding and support for refugee welfare programs. Advocating for international solutions and burden-sharing to ease the pressure on India.

### **Collaborative Welfare Model for Immigrants:**

- Identification of Immigrants through Census-Conduct a comprehensive census to identify immigrants.
- Assigning Separate Identity Cards-Issue identity cards to immigrants with reference to their native country.
- Signing MoU with Native Countries-Establish Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the immigrants' native countries to coordinate welfare efforts.
- Calculating Per Person Expenditure-Assess the total population of immigrants and calculate the per person expenditure needed for their welfare.



- Division of Expenditure-Allocate the calculated expenditure between the native country, asylum-giving country, and international organizations (e.g., World Bank, FAO, IMF).
- Fixing Responsibility Ratio-Agree on a fixed ratio (e.g., 60:20:20) for sharing the total expenditure among the involved parties (60 is for the source country, 20 for the host country, 20 by the international humanitarian organisations)
- Implementing Welfare Measures-Execute the agreed welfare measures continuously.
- Safe Deportation-Ensure the safe deportation of immigrants back to their native country when conditions allow.

The Collaborative Welfare Model for Immigrants provides a structured approach to addressing the challenges faced by Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants in India. By identifying immigrants through a comprehensive census, assigning them identity cards, and coordinating with their native countries, this model ensures that their welfare is managed efficiently and effectively

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, education is the cornerstone of successful integration and empowerment for Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants in India. Through community-based education programs, vocational training, and skill development, migrants can achieve economic self-reliance and improve their socio-economic status. Essential support in health, sanitation, legal aid, and documentation further secures their rights and enhances living conditions. Collaborative efforts with international organizations, NGOs, and local communities are crucial in amplifying these initiatives. The Collaborative Welfare Model underscores the importance of education in addressing migration crises, preventing statelessness, and fostering social inclusion, offering a sustainable and humane solution to the challenges faced by migrant communities.

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