

I am deeply grateful for the assistance provided by AIBS. The fellowship allowed me to conduct ten months of dissertation research in Bangladesh. This fieldwork was vital to my investigation of the situation for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and the international non-governmental organizations (INGOS) that try to help them.

My time in Bangladesh began with two and a half months (June 2011 to August 2011) of intensive language learning in Dhaka, during which I also began to connect with INGOS and confirm fieldwork plans. My fieldwork, generously supported by a fellowship from the American Institute of Bangladeshi studies, was conducted in Teknaf, Bangladesh from November 2011 to September 2012.

My fieldsite was a refugee camp where, in order to gain access to INGO staff and refugees, I volunteered full time and was given the title of Community Service Officer. The INGO I worked with was a relatively small one, and was somewhat unprepared to manage all aspects of a camp with 14,000 refugees. Their responsibilities included all medical services: a busy outpatient clinic, vaccinations, prenatal and postnatal care, a small inpatient hospital a pharmacy and a referral system to send complicated life-threatening emergencies to the nearest large hospital, more than two hours away. The INGO also provided emergency nutrition services for severely malnourished infants, children and pregnant and lactating women as well as water and sanitation.

My research focused on the INGO itself and the difficulties it had dealing with local corruption, it's own staff, the refugees and the government of Bangladesh. What I found was that although the INGO had many ideals (some of which had been imposed by its European Union funders) -- like a commitment to gender equality, ending gender violence, avoiding corruption and employing fair, transparent practices in hiring and

procurement, they were frequently unable to follow through on these ideals. As a result, they were less able to function effectively in their core work of helping refugees.

During my time in Bangladesh, violent conflict broke out in Myanmar, just a few miles from the camp where I worked. Although often referred to as interethnic conflict, the situation seemed to be more one of ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya, the same group that populated the refugee camps on the Bangladeshi side of the border. The response of the Bangladesh government was to dramatically increase the presence of border guards, who were ordered to push back any new refugees, a practice known as refoulement, and which is in violation of international law.

The INGO where I worked was in a difficult position, they wanted to be on good terms with the government, but wondered if their mandate to serve refugees should be expanded to help these new victims. Ultimately the government decided that all of the international NGOs working with refugees in that part of Bangladesh (including the one where I did my research) would have to cease operations, leaving thousands of refugees without water, emergency nutrition, and basic medical assistance. Without the presence of an INGO, they would also be vulnerable to abuse from corrupt locals. I was very grateful for the support of the T. Anne Cleary Fellowship, as it gave me the opportunity to document these important events, which provide crucial data for understanding how we deal with both protracted refugee situations and humanitarian crises.

In September 2012 I returned to the U.S. and began analyzing my data. To date, I have completed my preliminary analysis, and submitted an outline of the dissertation to my advisor.