The plight of the Rohingya refugee: Assessing current and predicted health and sanitation challenges

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THE PLIGHT OF THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE
Assessing current and predicted health and sanitation challenges

ABSTRACT:
The Rohingya people are a predominantly Muslim ethnic group in Buddhist-dominated Myanmar, where a history of colonialism has subjected them to a complicated and extraordinarily vulnerable position within the state. Often called the most persecuted minority in the world, they are a stateless nation, stripped of citizenship and denied their right to an identity or a homeland. Following a series of skirmishes in the Rakhine state in western Myanmar in 2016, violent persecution of the Rohingya escalated. Following a dramatic eruption of violence in August 2017, this ethnic cleansing has forced the displacement of over 700,000 people to refugee camps in Bangladesh. Often living in new camps built spontaneously to accommodate the enormous flow of new arrivals, refugees face conditions of overcrowding, threats of the incoming monsoon season, and vastly insufficient limited resources. This project attempts to understand the distribution of some of these challenges regionally across camps and populations, to evaluate what the greatest needs are and where they lie. All data for GIS analysis was obtained from the Humanitarian Data Exchange (within UN OHCA). In the midst of this humanitarian crisis, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh face a series of challenges to their current health and their hope for a healthy future.

RESULTS:

ROLE OF GIS:
Data downloaded from the Humanitarian Data Exchange was simplified in Excel into formats that could be easily joined to shape files, so that all the given information could be presented via GIS mapping. Particularly for the maps concerning latrine and water access, a qualitative questionnaire was converted into a numerical scale to allow for visualization. Indicators concerning various health and safety indicators for Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh were considered.

CONCLUSIONS
Visualization of population distribution and various aspects of access to basic health and sanitation measures show the concerns over the limited resources to support the Rohingyan refugees. The incoming storm season places urgency on finding solutions to the structural instability of the refugee camps. A solution to the Rohingyan plight is not close in sight, so public health and humanitarian officials must deeply consider how to best build up better health services and infrastructure for this displaced and persecuted population. For all the challenges, the available data is quite robust, and lends itself to strong policy prescriptions.

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Data source: Humanitarian Data Exchange

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