

Rohingya

Refugee quota factsheet

New Zealand Refugee Quota Rohingya Refugees

The New Zealand Government works with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to offer permanent resettlement solutions in New Zealand for 1000 refugees annually.¹ Refugees of Rohingya ethnicity are included in the 2017/2018 refugee quota and will be resettled to New Zealand throughout the year.

Prior to their arrival to New Zealand the Rohingya refugees were living in Malaysia recognised as refugees by the UNHCR

Before settlement in the community all refugees accepted under the annual refugee quota programme complete a six week reception programme at Auckland's Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.

In order to become successfully resettled, refugees will be accessing the assistance of mainstream services such as health, education, housing and Work & Income. The New Zealand Red Cross is the key agency responsible for assisting quota refugees in their initial community settlement.

This document aims to provide New Zealand's community-based professionals with general information about the Rohingya people, the human rights situation for Rohingya, and the Rohingya culture as well as some general information on supporting successful refugee resettlement in your community.

Humanitarian situation and needs

The Muslim minority living in western Myanmar/Burma's Rakhine State, at least 800,000 people, identify themselves as Rohingya.

For decades they have suffered legal and social discrimination. While there are historical economic relations with the Buddhist Rakhine community, there are also long-standing tensions between the two communities. The Rohingyas have been denied the right to citizenship and even the right to call themselves Rohingya, and were stripped of their voting rights in the last national and local elections.

They are also subject to many restrictions in day to day life: banned from travelling without authorization and prohibited from working outside their villages, they cannot get married without permission from the authorities, and, because of movement restrictions, they lack sufficient access to livelihood opportunities, medical care and education.

In 2012, widespread violence in Rakhine left 140,000 people, mostly Rohingya, displaced. While the authorities have initiated a limited return process in some areas, over 100,000 people remain displaced some four years after the events, living in squalid camps with only limited access to health care, education and livelihood opportunities.

In October 2016, a deadly assault on three border guard posts in northern Rakhine State triggered a series of violent incidents and military operations resulting in the suspension of humanitarian activities and the flight of over 74,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh in search of protection. With severely restricted humanitarian access, more than 130,000 people in Rakhine state were deprived of much-needed regular assistance. Since January 2017, gradual, though still limited access, has allowed the resumption of some previously suspended activities.²

¹ This figure includes an additional intake of 250 Syrians in the 2017/2018 quota year before the permanent quota increase to 1000 refugees takes effect from 2018/19

² European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), May 2017, *ECHO Factsheet – The Rohingya Crisis*

Cultural considerations:³

- › Every compact village forms a social unit with the mosque as its centre for the regulation of social life of the inhabitants of the area. The eldest, most pious, and influential man in the society is recognised as the head of the village society (*Samaj*) who decides all disputes among them with the help of village elders.
- › The Rohingyas practise endogamy (marrying only within the limits of a local community) and sometimes polygamy.⁴
- › Women typically do not work outside the home. They may do some street selling and domestic work close to home.⁵

Languages

Rohingya (pronounced 'Rohingja'), (also alternatively spelt Ruáingga or Ruwainggya) is the language spoken by the Rohingya people. It is related to the Chittagonian language spoken in the neighbouring south-eastern Chittagong Division of Bangladesh.

Many speak Malay (if they have lived in Malaysia)⁶

Various writing systems are used, including Arabic, Urdu, Hanifi, and Burmese, and the newer Rohingyalish, based on the Latin script.⁷

Many adult Rohingya refugees are illiterate and may be unable to sign their own name.⁸

■ Basic Rohingya:⁹

Hello – salam

Welcome – córman

Thanks – cúkor

Yes – ói

No – ná

Religion

All Rohingyas profess Islam. They are strict followers of conservative Islamic traditions.

They practice a Sufi-inflected variation of Sunni Islam.¹⁰

Supporting successful refugee resettlement:

- › Be aware of differences between yourself and your client / student in terms of customs, values and belief systems, as well as perceptions of service delivery and treatment. It may be advisable to obtain the assistance of a cultural adviser, or someone familiar with the culture of your client's home country to help you develop culturally appropriate forms of service delivery when working with a new refugee community in your area.
- › Many adult refugees will have only had limited formal education so communication styles may need to be adjusted accordingly.
- › Refugees may also have difficulty comprehending the importance New Zealand society places on official documentation. Some refugees may associate the recording of personal information with suspicion because of past experiences in their home country. As such, it is important to ensure refugee clients understand why you are recording information, where it will be stored and with whom it will be shared.
- › Explain your role carefully to the client and always use a professional interpreter if the client is not proficient in English. If your organisation does not have established procedures for using interpreters, interpreting services can be found through the following organisations: Interpreting New Zealand – www.interpret.org.nz/ and Language Line – www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/browse/language-line. The Citizens Advice Bureau also provides free and confidential support on settlement needs in 24 different languages – www.cab.org.nz/acabnearyou/language/link/Pages/home.aspx

3 M.A. Tahir Ba Tha, 1998, *A short history of Rohingya and Kamas of Burma*

4 Allard K. Lowenstein, October 2015, *Persecution of the Rohingyas Muslims*, Fortify Rights, p.34

5 International Rescue Committee, [No date], *Resettlement and the Rohingyas*

6 International Rescue Committee, [No date], *Resettlement and the Rohingyas*

7 World Heritage Encyclopaedia, [No date], *Rohingya language*

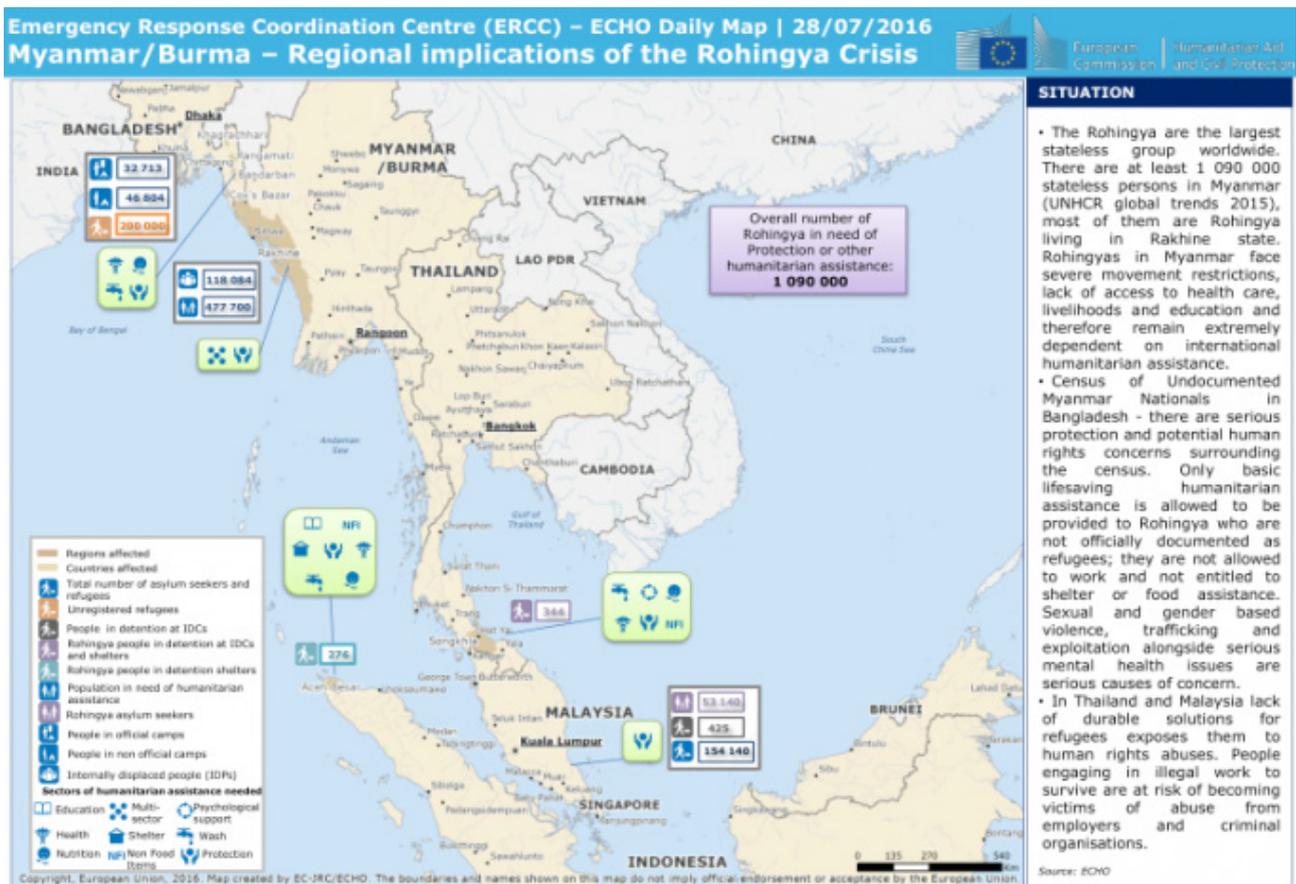
8 Hema Letchamanan, 2013, *Myanmar's Rohingya refugees in Malaysia: Education and the way forward*, Journal of International and Comparative Education, p.90

9 Rohingya Language Foundation, 28 January 2008 (last updated), *Rohingya to English Dictionary*

10 Eleanor Albert, 17 June 2015, *The Rohingya Migrant Crisis*, Council on Foreign Relations

New Zealand is one of twenty six countries that take part in the United Nations Refugee Agency's regular refugee resettlement programme. Our annual refugee quota of 1000 refugees is a reflection of the government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities to provide protection to refugees.

The New Zealand Government and a number of local organisations, such as New Zealand Red Cross, are helping these families to resettle, and to access the goods and services they need to restart their lives.



*Sourced from ECHO, 28 July 2016, Myanmar/Burma – Regional implications of the Rohingya crisis, www.reliefweb.int/map/myanmar/myanmarburma-regional-implications-rohingya-crisis-echo-daily-map-28072016

Additional Resources:

New Zealand Immigration has factsheets and videos for refugees and family members settling in New Zealand which are available at www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/our-strategies-and-projects/supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/information-for-refugees-settling-in-new-zealand

Detailed UNHCR guidelines for working refugees are available in a publication called *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, see www.unhcr.org/4a2cfe336.html

Al Jazeera, 29 October 2015, *Who are the Rohingya?*, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/10/rohingya-151024202611276.html

BBC, 10 June 2015, *Will anyone help the Rohingya people?*, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33007536

IRIN, 15 April 2016, *Where are the Rohingya boat survivors now?*, www.irinnews.org/news/2016/04/15/where-are-rohingya-boat-survivors-now

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 3 February 2017, *Report of OHCHR mission to Bangladesh: Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016*, www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/MM/FlashReport3Feb2017.pdf

UN Human Rights Council, 20 June 2016, *Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar*, A/HRC/32/18, www.refworld.org/docid/5768foe94.html

United States Department of State, 10 August 2016, *2015 Report on International Religious Freedom – Burma*, www.refworld.org/docid/57add89915.html

Contact Information

For more information about New Zealand's Refugee Quota programme, or New Zealand's Refugee Policy, please contact:

Sarah Ward
Resettlement Caseworker Coordinator
Refugee Quota Branch
New Zealand Immigration

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Email: Sarah.Ward@mbie.govt.nz

If you require further information or support on any health or education issue for the refugees recently resettled in your region, please contact the following specialist agencies located at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre:

Refugees as Survivors New Zealand (RASNZ)
Ph: (09) 270 0870
Website: www.rasnz.co.nz

Refugee Health Screening Service

Ph: (09) 276 6719
Website: www.refugeehealth.govt.nz

AUT – Centre for Refugee Education

Ph: 09 921 9366
Website: www.aut.ac.nz/community/aut-in-the-community/centre-for-refugee-education

INZ Resettlement Team

Ph: 09 928 2648
www.immigration.govt.nz

New Zealand Red Cross

Ph: 0800 RED CROSS
www.redcross.org.nz

Please note: No personal information will be released without written consent from the client.

