

UNHCR AND ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN ACEH: HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS AMIDST COORDINATION AND SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Since 2017, military operations in Myanmar, justified as responses to attacks by Rohingya insurgent groups, have resulted in large-scale ethnic cleansing, forcing over 700,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring countries, including Indonesia. Aceh, in particular, has become a significant destination due to its historical role as a refuge for displaced populations. The influx of refugees presents substantial challenges for local authorities and humanitarian organizations in meeting essential needs such as food, healthcare, and education. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has played a central role in responding to this humanitarian crisis by providing assistance and protection to Rohingya refugees in Aceh. Working closely with the Government of Indonesia and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UNHCR strives to uphold refugees' fundamental rights and to mobilize international support effectively. Its interventions include the provision of basic necessities, access to healthcare services, educational programs, and efforts to facilitate integration into the local community where feasible. Despite these comprehensive efforts, significant challenges persist. Coordination among various actors—including government agencies, NGOs, and international donors—is often complex, resulting in gaps or overlaps in service delivery. Additionally, the sustainability of support remains a critical concern, as protracted displacement requires long-term planning, continuous funding, and consistent monitoring. This study focuses on two main issues: the role of UNHCR in delivering assistance and protection to Rohingya refugees in Aceh, and the challenges the agency faces in fulfilling its protection mandate. Employing doctrinal legal research, the study emphasizes international legal frameworks governing refugee protection and state responsibility. The findings indicate that while UNHCR has made substantial efforts to address immediate humanitarian needs, persistent challenges in coordination and sustainability must be addressed. Strengthening these areas is essential to ensure that the protection, welfare, and rights of Rohingya refugees are maintained effectively and sustainably over the long term.

Keywords: *Rohingya Crisis; Rohingya Refugees; UNHCR Humanitarian Response; Refugee Protection Challenges; International Legal Frameworks.*

A. Introduction

The Rohingya refugee crisis originates from the protracted conflict in Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine State.¹ The Rohingya, who are predominantly Muslim, have long faced systemic discrimination and violence from the Myanmar government, which has historically refused to recognize them as official citizens.² As noted by Azeem Ibrahim³ in *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*, the Rohingya are often regarded as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, despite having lived in Myanmar for centuries. This stateless status renders them highly vulnerable to numerous human rights violations, including physical violence, land dispossession, and severe restrictions on their freedom of movement.

As a Muslim ethnic group residing in Rakhine State, Myanmar, the Rohingya community has long been subjected to systematic discrimination by the Myanmar government.⁴ This discrimination is evident in the denial of citizenship under the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, as well as in widespread acts of violence against the community.⁵ These conditions have prompted a large-scale exodus of Rohingya refugees to neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia, with Aceh serving as a primary entry point in Indonesia. The systematic deprivation of citizenship has exacerbated the vulnerabilities faced by the Rohingya, particularly in asserting their fundamental rights. Consequently, the community experiences significant legal

¹ Mohammad Musfequs Salehin and Md. Aslam Hossain, 'The Rohingya Dilemma: Exploring the Challenges of Local Integration in Bangladesh', *International Migration* 63, no. 3 (2025): e70027, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.70027>; Mohammad Musfequs Salehin, 'The Rohingya Crisis: Background on Myanmar, the Current Conflict, and Relevant Actors', in *Gendered Vulnerabilities and Violence in Forced Migration: The Rohingyas from Myanmar*, ed. Mohammad Musfequs Salehin (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-62435-3_3; Kawser Ahmed, 'Rethinking Humanitarian Diplomacy for Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis Resolution: A Critical Analysis', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 22 December 2025, 15423166251407446, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15423166251407446>.

² Stephen C. Druce, 'Myanmar's Unwanted Ethnic Minority: A History and Analysis of the Rohingya Crisis', in *Managing Conflicts in a Globalizing ASEAN: Incompatibility Management through Good Governance*, ed. Mikio Oishi (Springer Singapore, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-32-9570-4_2; A. K. M. Ahsan Ullah, 'Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: Seeking Justice for the "Stateless"', *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2016): 285–301, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986216660811>; Syed S. Mahmood et al., 'The Rohingya People of Myanmar: Health, Human Rights, and Identity', *The Lancet* 389, no. 10081 (2017): 1841–50, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)00646-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)00646-2); Druce, 'Myanmar's Unwanted Ethnic Minority: A History and Analysis of the Rohingya Crisis'.

³ Azeem Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Genocide*, 1st edn (Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴ Nehginpao Kipgen, 'Conflict in Rakhine State in Myanmar: Rohingya Muslims' Conundrum', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2013): 298–310, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2013.810117>; Jobair Alam, 'The Rohingya of Myanmar: Theoretical Significance of the Minority Status', *Asian Ethnicity* 19, no. 2 (2018): 180–210, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2017.1407236>.

⁵ Kezia Marlinata Sinaga et al., 'The Ethnic Rohingya Identity Crisis In Myanmar: Politicization of Identity and Implications on Human Rights', *ARRUS Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 4, no. 6(2024): 729–37, <https://doi.org/10.35877/soshum3421>.

uncertainty, rendering them unable to seek justice within Myanmar and compelling them to pursue asylum and protection in their host countries.⁶

In 2017, the crisis reached its peak when the Myanmar military launched operations in Rakhine State, claiming to respond to attacks by Rohingya insurgent groups.⁷ However, these operations resulted in mass killings, sexual violence, and the systematic burning of Rohingya villages, actions that the United Nations characterized as ethnic cleansing.⁸ Consequently, more than 700,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring countries, particularly Bangladesh, while others sought refuge in Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia. In Indonesia, Aceh has become one of the primary regions where Rohingya refugees seek asylum. Local communities in Aceh, sharing strong cultural and religious ties with the Rohingya, have extended support and solidarity. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain in providing adequate shelter, food, healthcare, and education for these refugees. According to a report in *Forced Migration Review*, despite the involvement of UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations, the international response to the Rohingya refugee crisis outside Bangladesh remains limited.⁹

The limited international response to the Rohingya crisis outside Bangladesh is shaped by a combination of political, legal, and practical factors, rather than by mere indifference toward refugees.¹⁰ These constraints create additional challenges for Rohingya refugees in securing their human rights, particularly in accessing basic necessities such as education in refugee camps,

⁶ Anthony Ware and Costas Laoutides, *Myanmar's 'Rohingya' Conflict* (Oxford University Press, 2018); Nasir Uddin, 'Understanding "Refugee Resettlement" from Below: Decoding the Rohingya Refugees' Lived Experience in Bangladesh', *World Development* 181 (September 2024): 106654, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2024.106654>; Md. Ismail Hossain et al., 'The Rohingya Refugee Crisis: A Threat to Peace and Security in South Asia', *The International Journal of Community and Social Development* 3, no. 4 (2021): 353–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/25166026211028365>; Ullah, 'Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: Seeking Justice for the "Stateless"'.
⁷ Malang Faye, 'A Forced Migration from Myanmar to Bangladesh and Beyond: Humanitarian Response to Rohingya Refugee Crisis', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 6, no. 1 (2021): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00098-4>; Nicole Messner et al., 'Qualitative Evidence of Crimes Against Humanity: The August 2017 Attacks on the Rohingya in Northern Rakhine State, Myanmar', *Conflict and Health* 13, no. 1 (2019): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-019-0227-8>.

⁸ Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Genocide*.
⁹ Mehdi Chowdhury et al., 'The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh: An Analysis of the Involvement of Local Humanitarian Actors', *Third World Quarterly* 43, no. 9 (2022): 2188–208, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2022.2085087>.

¹⁰ Gershon Dagba and Israel Nyaburi Nyadera, 'Position of Responsibility: International Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis – The Case of Western Countries', in *Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Myanmar: Ethnic Conflict and Resolution*, ed. Kudret Bülbül et al. (Springer Nature Singapore, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-6464-9_13.

healthcare, and security, which should be guaranteed under international law.¹¹ As a result, international attention and aid have remained heavily concentrated on Bangladesh, with comparatively limited support for refugees in neighboring countries.¹² Many nations, including Indonesia, India, Malaysia, and Thailand, have not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and therefore bear no legal obligation to offer permanent refuge or protection to the Rohingya.¹³ Consequently, responses in these countries are often restricted to temporary or symbolic humanitarian assistance, with only limited expansion in aid provision. Additionally, some states express concern that accommodating large numbers of Rohingya could provoke social tensions, intolerance, or domestic religious conflicts. Meanwhile, major powers frequently issue political condemnations of human rights violations, for instance through the United Nations, yet these actions are rarely accompanied by proportional sanctions or financial support to enforce sustainable solutions. Currently, approximately 700,000 Rohingya reside in refugee camps in Bangladesh, where the majority of international humanitarian efforts, including those by UNHCR and other NGOs, are concentrated.¹⁴

The global refugee crisis has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of the twenty-first century, driven in large part by conflict and violence across various regions of the world.¹⁵ Among the most significant of these crises is the persecution of the Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar, which has forced hundreds of thousands to flee and seek asylum in neighboring countries, including Indonesia.¹⁶ Since 2015, Aceh has served as a key destination for Rohingya refugees, following perilous journeys across the sea. The Rohingya now constitute one of the largest refugee communities globally, with a particularly massive wave of displacement occurring

¹¹ Jobair Alam, 'The Status and Rights of the Rohingya as Refugees under International Refugee Law: Challenges for a Durable Solution', *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 19, no. 2 (2021): 128–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2020.1746872>.

¹² Mohammad Sajedur Rahman and Nurul Huda Sakib, 'Statelessness, Forced Migration and the Security Dilemma along Borders: An Investigation of the Foreign Policy Stance of Bangladesh on the Rohingya Influx', *SN Social Sciences* 1, no. 7 (2021): 160, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00173-y>.

¹³ Maria Elsa Karina, 'Analisa Perbandingan Kebijakan Malaysia Dan Indonesia Terhadap Pengungsi Rohingya', *Padjadjaran Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 2 (2020): 158, <https://doi.org/10.24198/padjir.v2i2.26770>.

¹⁴ Shahana Afrose Chowdhury, *Young Rohingya Refugees: Risks and Future Prospects in Bangladesh BT - Handbook of Migration, International Relations and Security in Asia*, ed. A. K. M. Ahsan Ullah (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-8001-7_16-1.

¹⁵ Mohammed Nuruzzaman and Abdul Wohab, 'The Security Impact of the Rohingya Refugee Crisis on Bangladesh and Regional States: A Securitization Theoretical Perspective', *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 2026, 1–21, Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479591426100709>.

¹⁶ Kabir Md Shahin and Moyenuul Hasan, 'The Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Political and Humanitarian Perspectives', *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 23, no. 3 (2023): 151–61, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEAMJ-05-2023-0041>.

in 2017, following widespread violence in Rakhine State in August of that year.¹⁷ This exodus has been described as the largest refugee movement in Rohingya history and is considered the largest mass displacement in Asia since the Vietnam War.¹⁸

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations agency established in 1950, with a mandate to protect refugees and assist states in providing international protection to those fleeing war, persecution, and violence.¹⁹ In the context of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, UNHCR plays a critical role in coordinating assistance, safeguarding fundamental rights, and supporting the recovery and integration of refugees into local communities.

UNHCR has been actively engaged with the Rohingya refugee situation in Aceh since the arrival of the first wave in 2015, with the peak of displacement occurring in 2023 when hundreds of refugees unexpectedly arrived in the region. Through field teams and partnerships with the Indonesian government and local NGOs, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI), UNHCR provides emergency assistance such as food, clean water, temporary shelter, and basic healthcare services.²⁰ Additionally, the agency conducts registration and verification of refugee identities to prevent statelessness and monitors potential risks, including arbitrary detention or forced deportation, in accordance with the internationally recognized principle of non-refoulement.

Furthermore, UNHCR plays a long-term advocacy role in promoting sustainable solutions for Rohingya refugees in Aceh, including facilitating safe voluntary repatriation to Myanmar, resettlement in third countries, or local integration supported by skills development and educational programs.²¹ Collaboration with Aceh authorities and the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Human Rights ensures that refugees have access to public services such as education for

¹⁷ Lindsay Robbins, 'The Rohingya Case in Aceh: Indonesia's Role as a Destination for Refugees', *Towson University Journal of International Affairs* LIII, no. 2 (2020): 1–15, <https://wp.towson.edu/iajournal/articles/2010-2019/spring-2020/10535-2/>.

¹⁸ Mohd Aminul Karim, *Ethnicity and Geopolitics of Rohingya Crisis BT - Risks, Identity and Conflict: Theoretical Perspectives and Case Studies*, ed. Steven Ratuva et al. (Springer Singapore, 2021), 109–30, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1486-6_5.

¹⁹ Marjoleine Zieck, 'The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)', in *A Handbook on Post-1956 Hungarian Refugee Relief: From Local Crisis to Global Impact*, ed. Gusztáv D. Kecskés and Tamás Scheibner (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111316178-005>.

²⁰ Anisa Azzaulfa and Aulia Yuti Serera, 'The Role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Upholding Refugee Rights in Indonesia Based on the Implementation of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol', *Priviet Social Sciences Journal* 6, no. 1 (2026): 519–27, <https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v6i1.1242>.

²¹ Md. Rafiqul Islam and Muhammad Mazedul Haque, *Repatriation of Rohingya Refugees: Prospects and Challenges BT - Understanding the Rohingya Displacement: Security, Media, and Humanitarian Perspectives*, ed. Kawser Ahmed and Md. Rafiqul Islam (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), 257–73, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-1424-7_15.

children and healthcare, while community awareness campaigns promote social cohesion. Although challenges such as limited resources and geopolitical tensions persist, UNHCR's efforts remain a central pillar in upholding the dignity and hope of thousands of displaced individuals.²²

UNHCR's primary mandate is to provide international protection to refugees in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning a person to their home country if they face the risk of torture or other forms of inhumane treatment.²³ This principle underpins UNHCR's engagement with Rohingya refugees, who have endured systematic persecution in Myanmar. In Aceh, UNHCR works closely with the Indonesian government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities to provide logistical, healthcare, and educational support to the Rohingya.²⁴ In addition, UNHCR mobilizes international aid to support host countries. As Hathaway notes, "UNHCR serves as a liaison between host countries and the international community in coordinating collective responsibility to ensure sustainable protection for refugees."²⁵ In the context of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, UNHCR not only delivers humanitarian assistance directly but also plays a key role in strengthening national capacity to manage refugees effectively.

In its operations in Indonesia, UNHCR adopts a community-based approach that actively involves Rohingya refugees in decision-making processes concerning their protection needs. This approach aligns with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) outlined in the 2016 New York Declaration, which emphasizes equitable burden-sharing among states and the systematic engagement of non-state actors in responding to refugee crises.²⁶ As Betts and Collier²⁷ note, the effectiveness of humanitarian responses depends on the ability of international institutions to translate global normative commitments into adaptive, context-sensitive local implementation mechanisms in host countries. Accordingly, UNHCR's presence in Aceh represents not merely a palliative effort but a structural intervention aimed at establishing a sustainable protection ecosystem.

²² Malahayati Rahman and Laila Muhammad Rasyid, 'From International Protocol to Practice: Aceh's Holistic Response to Rohingya Refugees', *Pravo I Więz* 57, no. 4 (2025): 993–1023.

²³ Clare Frances Moran, 'Strengthening the Principle of Non-Refoulement', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 25, no. 6 (2021): 1032–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2020.1811690>.

²⁴ Rahman and Rasyid, 'From International Protocol to Practice: Aceh's Holistic Response to Rohingya Refugees'.

²⁵ James C. Hathaway, 'The Rights of Refugees under International Law', in *The Rights of Refugees Under International Law*, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108863537.00>.

²⁶ Simona Vezzoli et al., 'Refugee Protection in the Region: A Survey and Evaluation of Current Trends', *International Migration* 61, no. 3 (2023): 196–209, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13031>.

²⁷ Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System* (Penguin UK, 2017).

Nevertheless, the challenges faced by UNHCR in managing Rohingya refugees in Aceh are closely intertwined with the complexities of Indonesia's domestic legal framework, which has not yet ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. The absence of comprehensive national legislation creates a regulatory vacuum that significantly limits UNHCR's ability to confer a clear legal status on refugees.²⁸ Under these conditions, UNHCR operates primarily through ad hoc memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the Indonesian government, leaving refugee protection vulnerable to shifts in domestic political policies. These challenges are compounded by rising xenophobic sentiment in some local communities, which, if unaddressed, could impede temporary local integration as a durable solution for the Rohingya. While Indonesia has issued presidential regulations on refugee management, these measures provide limited legal certainty. Ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention would enable Indonesia to adopt a more progressive legal framework consistent with its constitutional commitment to global peace and security.

In the theory of progressive law, the creation of new avenues for protecting human rights represents a form of legal advancement within a country.²⁹ Progressive law understands law not merely as written rules but as instruments that are enforceable and beneficial to society. Its essence involves a radical critique of rigid legal positivism—a paradigm that regards the legal text as the sole source of legitimacy and treats the absence of written norms as justification for withholding protection.³⁰ Progressive legal norms challenge the formalistic reasoning that has been used to deny protection to human rights survivors, such as Rohingya refugees, on the grounds that no ratified legal instruments exist. From this perspective, when formal legal systems fail to protect the most vulnerable, it is the system itself that must be questioned and transcended, rather than postponing human needs until the law provides an answer. In this context, UNHCR's presence in Aceh exemplifies progressive law, transcending the limitations of formal legal texts to fulfill the fundamental purpose of law: the protection of human dignity.

Moreover, UNHCR strategically supports long-term solutions for Rohingya refugees through three primary pathways: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement to third

²⁸ Yordan Gunawan et al., 'Indonesia's Responsibility towards Rohingya Refugees: Analysis of the 1951 Refugee Convention', *Legality : Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 32, no. 2 (2024): 182–94, <https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v32i2.32164>.

²⁹ Andrea Scoseria Katz, 'The Lost Promise of Progressive Formalism', *Texas Law Review* 99, no. 4 (2021): 679–742, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.T2024082700019790435740756>; Satjipto Rahardjo, 'Hukum Progresif: Hukum Yang Membebaskan', *Jurnal Hukum Progresif* 1, no. 1 (2011): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.14710/hp.1.1.1-24>; Satjipto Rahardjo, *Membedah Hukum Progresif* (Kompas, 2006).

³⁰ Yulia Neta et al., 'The Model of Local Regulation of the Human Rights Fulfillment Based on Progressive Law', *Jambura Law Review* 3, no. Special issue (2021): 18–34, <https://doi.org/10.33756/jlr.v3i0.7301>.

countries. Each of these options, however, faces significant challenges. Local integration is constrained by Indonesia's insufficient legal framework; repatriation to Myanmar remains unfeasible as long as the structural conditions driving displacement persist; and the number of countries willing to accept resettled refugees is far smaller than the number of refugees requiring relocation. Consequently, UNHCR occupies a fundamentally paradoxical position: it is tasked with providing effective protection while simultaneously constrained by its mandate, available resources, and the political support of member states.

In response to these complexities, UNHCR continues to enhance collaboration by expanding multi-stakeholder partnerships with local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities, and the private sector, within the framework of a whole-of-society approach. This approach represents a paradigm shift in global refugee governance, moving from a centralized, reactive model to a more decentralized, participatory, and prevention-oriented system. As Tan and Gammeltoft-Hansen³¹ note, the long-term effectiveness of the international refugee protection system ultimately depends on UNHCR's ability to foster political consensus among member states, ensuring that universal humanitarian principles are not subordinated to narrow national interests. In this context, UNHCR's work in Aceh serves as a microcosm of the broader challenges confronting the international refugee protection regime.

The Rohingya refugee crisis has significantly impacted multiple countries, including Indonesia. Aceh, in particular, has emerged as a major destination for Rohingya fleeing the conflict in Myanmar. This situation began in 2015, when thousands of Rohingya refugees arrived on Aceh's coast after perilous journeys across the sea. Aceh's history as a refuge for populations displaced by prior crises, including the Aceh conflict and the 2004 tsunami disaster, demonstrates both its vulnerability and its capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies.³² Rohingya refugees arriving in Aceh often face severe hardships, including exhaustion from long sea voyages and limited access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, and adequate shelter.³³ Addressing these needs requires coordinated efforts among the Indonesian government, international organizations, and local communities. UNHCR plays a crucial role in providing

³¹ Nikolas Feith Tan and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, 'A Topographical Approach to Accountability for Human Rights Violations in Migration Control', *German Law Journal* 21, no. 3 (2020): 335–54, Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2020.31>.

³² Kodrat Adami, 'Ambivalence in Rejection Toward Rohingya Refugees in Aceh', *Seuneubok Lada: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sejarah, Sosial, Budaya Dan Pendidikan* 12, no. 2 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.33059/jsnbl.v12i2.12204>.

³³ Sophia Listriani et al., 'Toward a New Legal Framework for Settling Rohingya's Refugee Crisis in Indonesia: A Lesson Learned from Aceh Province', *Atlantis Press* 413, no. April 2018 (2020): 277–85, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200306.227>.

humanitarian assistance and protection for Rohingya refugees in Aceh, working closely with the Indonesian government and various local NGOs to ensure that refugees' rights are respected and basic needs are met. Nonetheless, significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of coordination among stakeholders and the long-term sustainability of assistance.³⁴

The research titled “*UNHCR and Rohingya Refugees in Aceh: Humanitarian Interventions Amidst Coordination and Sustainability Challenges*” presents a distinctive scientific contribution within the field of Rohingya refugee studies, which has evolved significantly over the past decade. Most previous studies on the Rohingya refugee crisis adopt a macro perspective, focusing primarily on regional geopolitical dynamics in Southeast Asia. For instance, Nguyen's³⁵ research, “*Refugee Protection in ASEAN: The Case of The Rohingya Refugee Crisis*,” examines the ethnic dimensions of the crisis from an ASEAN perspective, while Kipgen's³⁶ study, “*The Rohingya Crisis: The Centrality of Identity and Citizenship*,” highlights the structural failure of the Myanmar government in providing citizenship recognition. In contrast, this study adopts a geographically and institutionally focused approach, placing Aceh as the main unit of analysis and examining UNHCR as the central actor. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of refugee protection dynamics at the local level, which are often overlooked in broader regional or global analyses.

The novelty of this research becomes even more apparent when compared to studies that specifically address Indonesia's response to Rohingya refugees. For example, Kneebone's³⁷ research, “*Australia as a Powerbroker on Refugee Protection in Southeast Asia: The Relationship with Indonesia*,” makes significant contributions by mapping Indonesia's immigration policies toward asylum seekers. However, such studies focus predominantly on formal policy frameworks and detention mechanisms, without sufficiently exploring the operational role of UNHCR in the field, particularly in Aceh. Similarly, Shukri's³⁸ “*The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Southeast Asia: ASEAN's Role and Way Forward*” emphasizes the normative dimensions of international law in refugee protection, but does not adequately address the practical implementation of these norms

³⁴ Chairussani Abbas Sopamena, ‘Pengungsi Rohingya Dan Potensi Konflik & Kemajemukan Horizontal Di Aceh’, *Caraka Prabhu: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 7, no. 2 (2023): 85–115, <https://doi.org/10.36859/jcp.v7i2.1927>.

³⁵ Thi Anh Thu Nguyen, ‘Refugee Protection in ASEAN: The Case of The Rohingya Refugee Crisis’ (Griffith University, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/4661>.

³⁶ Nehginpao Kipgen, ‘The Rohingya Crisis: The Centrality of Identity and Citizenship’, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2019): 61–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2019.1575019>.

³⁷ Susan Kneebone, ‘Australia as a Powerbroker on Refugee Protection in Southeast Asia: The Relationship with Indonesia’, *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 33, no. 1 (2017): 29–41, <https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40446>.

³⁸ Shazwanis Shukri, ‘The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Southeast Asia: ASEAN's Role and Way Forward’, *Journal of International Studies* 17 (2021): 239–63, <https://doi.org/10.32890/jis2021.17.10>.

in local contexts with unique social, cultural, and political characteristics, such as Aceh. By integrating international law, institutional analysis, and field-based local research, this study fills a critical analytical gap and offers a cohesive framework for understanding refugee protection.

This research develops a multidimensional analytical framework that simultaneously incorporates the concept of international responsibility sharing, the principle of non-refoulement, and the theory of the whole-of-society approach to capture the complexity of UNHCR's role in Aceh. Such a systematic integration of theoretical frameworks has not been previously applied in studies on Rohingya refugees in Indonesia, thereby providing significant epistemological value for advancing international refugee law and international relations scholarship.

A further novel contribution of this study lies in its focus on capacity building and institutional empowerment by UNHCR to establish a sustainable refugee protection ecosystem in Aceh. While previous studies have addressed UNHCR's general role in Southeast Asia, they have not examined how UNHCR strengthens the capacities of local governments and civil society organizations as part of long-term protection strategies. This research explicitly investigates mechanisms of capacity transfer and assesses the extent to which these efforts have succeeded in creating a protection system that is not entirely dependent on UNHCR, but can be independently operated by local actors with UNHCR support. This perspective offers an important dimension for understanding the sustainability of refugee protection in countries, such as Indonesia, that lack comprehensive national legal frameworks for refugees.

In this study, two key issues are addressed to provide deeper insight into UNHCR's role and the challenges it faces, as well as the international responsibilities in protecting Rohingya refugees in Aceh. First, what is UNHCR's role in providing assistance and protection for Rohingya refugees in Aceh, and to what extent do these efforts meet their urgent needs? Second, what are the main challenges UNHCR faces in implementing its mandate in Aceh, and how can international responsibilities be optimized to overcome these challenges?

The research method employed in this study is doctrinal legal research, a method used in legal scholarship to analyze and interpret existing legal regulations. This study aims to examine how international regulations and policies govern the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the international responsibilities involved in protecting Rohingya refugees in Aceh.

This method emphasizes the study of normative legal materials, including laws, regulations, court decisions, international legal instruments, and other legal literature. In this research, the primary sources consist of international legal instruments related to refugee protection, such as the

1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as UNHCR documents and reports concerning the situation of Rohingya refugees.³⁹ Additionally, international court decisions, UN resolutions, and scholarly literature on international responsibility are utilized.⁴⁰ For instance, legal documents such as the 2001 Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts are analyzed to understand aspects of international responsibility in refugee protection. Furthermore, legal scholarly literature, including journals discussing the role of UNHCR and state responsibilities in protecting refugees, is incorporated, with a particular focus on the Rohingya case in Aceh.

The principal legal sources in this study are authoritative, legally binding instruments that specifically regulate refugee protection under international law. The 1951 Refugee Convention (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees) and the 1967 New York Protocol (Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees) are the key instruments defining the status of refugees, their rights, and the obligations of state parties, including the principle of non-refoulement, which is the cornerstone of international protection. Although Indonesia has not ratified these instruments, they remain relevant as global normative standards serving as evaluative benchmarks in this research.

Another primary legal source is the 1950 UNHCR Statute (Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), established through UN General Assembly Resolution No. 428 (V) of 1950, which explicitly regulates the mandate, functions, and authority of UNHCR in providing international protection to refugees. This statute serves as the main normative reference for analyzing the extent to which UNHCR has effectively carried out its mandate in Aceh.

Additionally, the 1945 Charter of the United Nations, particularly Article 1(3) on international cooperation in addressing humanitarian issues and Articles 55 and 56 regarding the collective responsibilities of UN member states in promoting human rights, serves as an essential primary legal material. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially Article 14 on the right to seek asylum from persecution, further reinforces the normative basis for the protection of Rohingya refugees. The 1984 Convention Against Torture (CAT) is also included as a primary source due to its relevance to the extended non-refoulement principle, which prohibits returning individuals to countries where they may face torture.

³⁹ UNHCR, 'UNHCR Report: Rohingya Refugees, Mostly Women and Children, Facing Deadlier Journeys in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea', Unhcr.Org, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/unhcr-report-rohingya-refugees-mostly-women-and-children-facing-deadlier>.

⁴⁰ Hathaway, 'The Rights of Refugees under International Law'.

Finally, at the domestic level, Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 125 of 2016 concerning the Handling of Refugees from Abroad constitutes a key primary legal material. It is the only national regulation specifically governing procedures for handling refugees in Indonesia and provides the operational framework for UNHCR's coordination with Indonesian authorities in Aceh.

B. UNHCR's Humanitarian Intervention in Aceh: Legal, Normative, and Operational Perspectives

UNHCR has played a crucial role in providing essential humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees in Aceh.⁴¹ These refugees, fleeing crisis and oppression in Myanmar, face extremely difficult circumstances. They are often compelled to live in deplorable conditions with limited access to basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter. In response to these urgent needs, UNHCR has been actively engaged in providing protection and support.⁴²

From the perspective of international humanitarian theory, the role of UNHCR in Aceh can be analyzed through the lens of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which establishes the organization's core protective mandate.⁴³ UNHCR functions as a normative actor upholding the principle of non-refoulement, ensuring that refugees are not forcibly returned to countries where they face the risk of persecution.⁴⁴ Its intervention in Aceh is not merely a reactive response to an unexpected influx of refugees but represents a practical implementation of the international legal framework, which imposes *erga omnes* obligations on host countries such as Indonesia to safeguard fundamental human rights, consistent with the humanitarian interpretation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Tedi Sudrajat et al., 'Questioning Indonesia's Role in Addressing Rohingya Refugees: A Legal, Humanitarian, and State Responsibility Perspective.', *Volkgeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Dan Konstitusi* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.24090/volkgeist.v7i1.10506>; Abu Faisal Md. Khaled, 'Do No Harm in Refugee Humanitarian Aid: The Case of the Rohingya Humanitarian Response', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 6, no. 1 (2021): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00093-9>; Shukri, 'The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Southeast Asia: ASEAN's Role and Way Forward'.

⁴² Nazifa Rafa et al., 'The Pursuit of Energy in Refugee Contexts: Discrimination, Displacement, and Humanitarian Energy Access for the Rohingya Refugees Displaced to Bangladesh', *Energy Research & Social Science* 83 (2022): 102334, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102334>.

⁴³ Cifebrima Suyastri et al., 'Legal Gap in Refugee Protection in Non-Signatory Countries: An Evidence from Indonesia', *Danube* 14, no. 3 (2023): 193–214, <https://doi.org/10.2478/danb-2023-0012>.

⁴⁴ Derya Ozkul and Natalie Welfens, 'UNHCR–State Relations: Transfer of Authority over Refugee Status Determination', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 38, no. 1 (2025): 223–39, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feae080>.

⁴⁵ Stephanie Schwartz, 'Refugee Return without Refoulement: Rethinking State Strategies to Evade Asylum Norms', *International Migration Review*, 29 July 2025, 01979183251359175, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01979183251359175>.

The challenges encountered by Rohingya refugees, including inadequate access to basic resources, can be understood through the theory of structural dependency in refugee studies, which highlights how Myanmar's geopolitical instability amplifies their vulnerability. UNHCR addresses these challenges through multi-stakeholder coordination, applying the cluster approach principles introduced after the 2005 Humanitarian Response Reform.⁴⁶ This methodology ensures the effective allocation of resources for shelter, food security, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), mitigating secondary risks such as infectious diseases and social tensions in Aceh, which often arise from competition over scarce resources in developing countries.

Moreover, refugee integration theory underscores the tension between temporary and long-term solutions in Aceh. UNHCR's interventions not only address immediate survival needs but also strengthen local capacity through cash-based programs and community-based protection initiatives, potentially enhancing the resilience of host communities. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain, particularly in the context of Indonesia's status as a non-signatory to the 1951 Convention, which requires careful diplomacy to promote long-term inclusive policies that protect both refugees and local populations.

The success of UNHCR can be assessed using the rights-based approach paradigm in humanitarian aid, which emphasizes refugees' engagement as active agents rather than passive beneficiaries.⁴⁷ In Aceh, UNHCR efforts such as age, gender, and diversity (AGD) mainstreaming ensure that vulnerable groups of Rohingya women, children, and the elderly are prioritized, addressing structural inequities. This argument highlights that without UNHCR intervention, the Rohingya crisis could become a classic case of long-term displacement, exacerbating the cycle of poverty and regional instability, as demonstrated in the spillover effects model on Southeast Asian refugee dynamics.

One of the main components of humanitarian assistance provided by UNHCR is the distribution of food. Rohingya refugees often experience food shortages due to their unstable living conditions. To address this issue, UNHCR distributes food aid that includes rice, staple foodstuffs, and other essential products necessary to meet the basic nutritional needs of refugees. This

⁴⁶ Peter James Matthew Thomas et al., 'Moving beyond Informal Action: Sustainable Energy and the Humanitarian Response System', *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 6, no. 1 (2021): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00102-x>.

⁴⁷ Morten Broberg and Hans-Otto Sano, 'Strengths and Weaknesses in a Human Rights-Based Approach to International Development – an Analysis of a Rights-Based Approach to Development Assistance Based on Practical Experiences', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 22, no. 5 (2018): 664–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2017.1408591>.

assistance is designed to ensure that refugees not only have enough food to survive but also access to nutritious food.⁴⁸

In addition, UNHCR addresses the need for clean water by providing adequate sanitation facilities. These facilities include the construction and maintenance of safe and clean toilets, as well as an efficient sewage system. Proper sanitation not only ensures access to safe sewage disposal but also helps prevent the spread of diseases associated with poor sanitation. With adequate facilities, the risk of waterborne infections and diseases can be significantly reduced.⁴⁹ UNHCR also focuses on the direct distribution of clean water, providing it through various methods, including water tank deliveries and the installation of water distribution points. The water supplied is carefully maintained to meet international health standards. This program is designed to meet refugees' basic needs for consumption, hygiene, and other daily necessities.⁵⁰

UNHCR's clean water programs focus not only on supply but also on disease prevention. To reduce the risk of waterborne diseases, UNHCR conducts regular water quality monitoring and implements cleaning and disinfection measures as needed. Refugees are also provided with education on hygiene and sanitation practices to ensure they understand the importance of using clean water and maintaining personal hygiene.⁵¹ UNHCR regularly evaluates the effectiveness of these programs to ensure that assistance is appropriate to refugees' needs and effective in preventing disease. This evaluation involves collecting field data on water quality, refugee satisfaction, and the health impacts of implemented initiatives. The results are used to adjust and improve the program to better serve refugees.⁵²

In addition to physical assistance, UNHCR provides protection and psychosocial support to Rohingya refugees. These programs include health services, counseling, and support to address trauma caused by violence and oppression in their home country. Psychosocial support is crucial for helping refugees recover from traumatic experiences and adapt to their new environment. UNHCR collaborates closely with local partners to provide health services and psychological counseling, addressing the mental and emotional impact of violence and persecution. These

⁴⁸ Huma Haider, 'Humanitarian Ration Cuts: Impacts on Vulnerable Groups.', *K4D Helpdesk Report 1181. Institute of Development Studies*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.19088/K4D.2022.125>.

⁴⁹ M. Irvanni Bahri et al., 'Between Sympathy and Hostility: Acehese Attitudes towards Rohingya Refugees', *Analisa: Journal of Social Science & Religion* 9, no. 2 (2024): 163–85, <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v9i2.2541>.

⁵⁰ UNHCR, *Annual Report on Refugee Assistance in Aceh* (Geneva, 2021).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

programs aim to restore refugees' mental and emotional well-being, which is a vital aspect of human protection.

UNHCR has played a critical role in providing humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees in Aceh, Indonesia.⁵³ Fleeing crisis and oppression in Myanmar, these refugees face major challenges in accessing basic necessities such as food, clean water, and adequate housing. In this context, UNHCR actively responds to their urgent needs. Assistance covers various essential aspects, with food distribution being a primary component. Recognizing that refugees often face food shortages, UNHCR organizes distributions that include rice and other staple foods. This program ensures that refugees not only have enough food to survive but also access to nutritious food, which is essential for their well-being.

In addition to food distribution, UNHCR also prioritizes providing clean water. They address this need through the provision of adequate sanitation facilities, including the construction and maintenance of safe toilets and efficient sewage systems.⁵⁴ Proper sanitation not only ensures that refugees have access to safe waste disposal but also helps prevent the spread of diseases associated with poor hygiene. Clean water distribution is carried out through various methods, including tank deliveries and the installation of water points, accompanied by water quality monitoring and hygiene education. These measures significantly reduce the risk of waterborne diseases and ensure refugees have access to safe water for drinking and daily needs.

UNHCR's support extends beyond physical assistance. The organization also provides protection and psychosocial support to refugees, including health services, counseling, and programs to address trauma resulting from violence and oppression in their home countries. Psychosocial support is crucial for helping refugees recover from traumatic experiences and adapt to their new environment.⁵⁵

To strengthen refugee capacity, UNHCR collaborates closely with local communities and the Indonesian government. This collaboration focuses on enhancing protection systems and

⁵³ Fauzan et al., 'The Importance of Humanistic Dimension in Managing Rohingya Refugees in the Indonesian Western Province of Aceh.', *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 30, no. 3 (2022): 1049–69, <https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.30.3.07>.

⁵⁴ A. A. Cronin et al., 'A Review of Water and Sanitation Provision in Refugee Camps in Association with Selected Health and Nutrition Indicators – the Need for Integrated Service Provision', *Journal of Water and Health* 6, no. 1 (2007): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.2166/wh.2007.019>; T. Yasmin et al., 'A System Approach to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Resilience and Sustainability in Refugee Communities', *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 39, no. 5 (2023): 691–723, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07900627.2022.2131362>.

⁵⁵ Bianca Della Rocca et al., 'Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Mental Health Problems in Child and Adolescent Refugees and Asylum Seekers: A Systematic Review on Psychosocial Interventions', *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 70, no. 4 (2024): 653–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207640231214964>.

providing training for local authorities to ensure that refugee rights are upheld. By fostering community involvement, UNHCR aims to prevent potential tensions between refugees and local residents, creating mutually beneficial relationships.⁵⁶ In Indonesia, which lacks a comprehensive national refugee law, UNHCR's efforts to strengthen protection systems serve as a vital mechanism to fill this legislative gap. The organization operates not merely as a provider of material assistance but as an architect of a system that ensures Rohingya refugees in Aceh are treated with dignity despite their ambiguous legal status under Indonesian law. Through coordination with Presidential Regulation Number 125 of 2016 on the Handling of Foreign Refugees—the only available legal framework—UNHCR has successfully maximized this limited protection space, prioritizing the safety of refugees on the ground.

However, Indonesia's refusal to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention continues to expose gaps in the country's human rights framework.⁵⁷ The lack of a comprehensive legal foundation leaves refugees in a vulnerable position without sufficient protection. Legal reforms need to adopt a progressive paradigm that aligns with global standards, allowing a nation's legal system to evolve in response to social and international trends.

One of UNHCR's most tangible achievements is its ability to reduce social tensions between Rohingya refugees and the local Aceh population—a challenge that cannot be addressed solely through legal measures. The recurring waves of Rohingya arrivals, particularly the significant increase in 2023–2024, sparked resistance from parts of Acehnese society who perceived economic and social burdens. At this juncture, UNHCR plays a critical mediating role, facilitating dialogue between refugees and local residents, fostering a shared humanitarian narrative, and ensuring that aid distribution does not generate resentment. By actively building social capital, UNHCR contributes to the long-term sustainability of refugee protection in a context where legally binding obligations are limited.⁵⁸

The legitimacy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) operating in Indonesia, despite the country's non-ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention, rests on

⁵⁶ Ridwan Arifin et al., 'Building a Model for Refugee Rights Fulfillment: Community Collaboration at Cisarua Refugee Learning Centre in the Context of International Law', *Indonesian Journal of Legal Community Engagement* 8, no. 2 (2025): 469–92, <https://doi.org/10.15294/jphi.v8i2.33111>.

⁵⁷ Dio Herdiawan Tobing, 'Connecting the Obligation Gap: Indonesia's Non-Refoulement Responsibility Beyond the 1951 Refugee Convention', *Asian Journal of Law and Society* 8, no. 3 (2021): 521–35, Cambridge Core, <https://doi.org/10.1017/als.2021.7>.

⁵⁸ Ainun Nishat Chowdhury and Ridwan Islam Sifat, 'The Impact of Islamophobia on the Persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya: A Human Rights Perspective', *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 9, no. 2 (2024): 185–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-024-00309-z>.

several interlocking foundations that blend international law, human rights obligations, and Indonesia's own constitutional commitments. The first and most fundamental basis is the UN's universal mandate as articulated in the founding statute of UNHCR. UNHCR derives its legitimacy not from individual state ratifications of refugee instruments, but directly from the UN General Assembly Resolution No. 428 (V) of 1950, which formally established the agency. Indonesia, as a founding member of the United Nations since 1950 and later fully reinstated as a member in 1966, implicitly recognizes the authority of UNHCR by virtue of its ongoing membership in the international organization. In this context, the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, a cornerstone of international law, dictates that all members of an international organization are bound to respect the bodies and instruments emanating from that organization. Consequently, Indonesia's continued participation in the UN entails an implicit acknowledgment of UNHCR's presence and operational legality within its territory. The argument is strengthened by the understanding that membership in the UN carries with it responsibilities toward the broader international community, including adherence to its humanitarian institutions. Indonesia cannot credibly claim to be a responsible member of the UN system while simultaneously rejecting one of its most essential agencies tasked with refugee protection. This universalist foundation thus situates UNHCR's presence in Indonesia not as a discretionary matter contingent on domestic ratification of a treaty, but as a natural and expected consequence of Indonesia's commitment to the UN system.

Beyond the institutional basis of the UN, the operational legitimacy of UNHCR in Indonesia is reinforced by Indonesia's obligations under universal human rights law, particularly as *erga omnes* obligations that bind all states without exception. These obligations arise from the ratification of international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) through Law No. 12 of 2005, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) through Law No. 11 of 2005. Both covenants enshrine fundamental protections such as the right to life, the prohibition of torture, and the right to an adequate standard of living, all of which apply indiscriminately to anyone within the territory or jurisdiction of Indonesia, including non-citizens such as Rohingya refugees. A key principle in this regard is non-refoulement, which prohibits the forced return of individuals to countries where they would face persecution or life-threatening conditions. While often associated exclusively with the 1951 Refugee Convention, non-refoulement has been elevated to the status of *jus cogens*, a

peremptory norm of international law from which no derogation is permitted.⁵⁹ Accordingly, Indonesia is bound by the prohibition of deporting refugees to dangerous locations not because of any specific treaty obligation, but because this principle is part of customary international law that applies universally. This erga omnes dimension ensures that UNHCR's interventions in Indonesia are not merely advisory or discretionary; they align with binding human rights standards that the state is obliged to uphold, independent of domestic ratification of refugee-specific treaties.

A third, often underappreciated but constitutionally compelling foundation for UNHCR's presence lies within Indonesia's own domestic legal framework. The Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia explicitly commits the nation to participate in the maintenance of world order based on freedom, eternal peace, and social justice. This constitutional vision is not rhetorical but establishes affirmative obligations for both domestic and foreign policy, framing Indonesia's engagement with international humanitarian institutions as an extension of its constitutional mission. Furthermore, the amendments to the 1945 Constitution, particularly Article 28I, recognize human rights as non-derogable and integral to the nation's legal order. These provisions reflect Indonesia's constitutional commitment to universal human rights principles and create a domestic legal environment in which the protection of refugees, including the Rohingya in Aceh, directly contributes to the realization of the nation's foundational commitments. By facilitating UNHCR's operations, Indonesia not only fulfills its international obligations but also advances the objectives codified in its own constitution. Conversely, rejecting or obstructing UNHCR could be viewed as both diplomatically counterproductive and potentially unconstitutional, as it would conflict with the state's stated commitment to uphold human rights and contribute to global peace and justice. This domestic legal basis, therefore, provides a robust justification for UNHCR's operational legitimacy, demonstrating that the agency's presence aligns seamlessly with Indonesia's highest legal and normative frameworks.

When these three dimensions—the UN's universal mandate, the erga omnes obligations of international human rights law, and the constitutional commitments of Indonesia—are considered together, they form a comprehensive foundation for UNHCR's role in Indonesia. Each dimension reinforces the others, creating a legal and normative ecosystem in which UNHCR operates

⁵⁹ Cathryn Costello and Michelle Foster, 'Non-Refoulement as Custom and Jus Cogens? Putting the Prohibition to the Test', in *Netherlands Yearbook of International Law 2015: Jus Cogens: Quo Vadis?*, ed. Maarten den Heijer and Harmen van der Wilt (T.M.C. Asser Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-114-2_10; Jean Allain, 'The Jus Cogens Nature of Non-Refoulement', *International Journal of Refugee Law* 13, no. 4 (2001): 533–58, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/13.4.533>.

legitimately, independently of the formal ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The UN mandate provides institutional and procedural legitimacy; the human rights obligations provide substantive legal norms and imperatives that the state must respect; and the constitutional framework situates these international commitments within the domestic legal order, ensuring that refugee protection is consistent with both international expectations and national law. In practice, this multi-layered legitimacy allows UNHCR to engage in protection, assistance, and capacity-building activities without ambiguity regarding the legality of its operations. It also enables the agency to act as a critical intermediary between international norms and local governance, translating universal principles into actionable programs that address the urgent needs of vulnerable populations while respecting local socio-political realities.

In the context of Aceh, this layered legitimacy is particularly significant. Aceh, due to its unique historical, social, and political circumstances, requires tailored interventions in refugee protection that go beyond the general policies applied in other parts of Indonesia. UNHCR's operations in Aceh must navigate complex local dynamics, including the capacities of provincial government agencies, the role of civil society organizations, and community attitudes toward refugees. The combination of international institutional authority, binding human rights obligations, and constitutional alignment equips UNHCR with the legitimacy and authority to engage effectively with all relevant stakeholders. It provides a framework within which operational decisions can be made confidently, knowing that these actions are grounded in multiple, mutually reinforcing sources of law and normative expectation. This legitimacy also serves to insulate UNHCR's activities from potential domestic political contestation, emphasizing that the agency's work is not a matter of foreign imposition but a realization of Indonesia's own legal and moral commitments.

Moreover, the principles underpinning UNHCR's legitimacy in Indonesia highlight the broader philosophical and legal convergence between state sovereignty and international humanitarian obligations. While states retain sovereignty over their territory, membership in the United Nations, ratification of human rights instruments, and constitutional commitments to human rights collectively create binding obligations that transcend purely domestic considerations. In this sense, Indonesia's sovereignty is exercised not in isolation but in coordination with, and sometimes constrained by, international norms designed to protect the most vulnerable. UNHCR's presence in Indonesia exemplifies how international institutions and domestic legal commitments can work in tandem to ensure that refugees receive protection, illustrating a pragmatic and principled balance between national autonomy and global responsibility.

Although Indonesia is not legally bound by the 1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR's sustained and structured presence has created normative expectations among the central government, Aceh regional authorities, and the international community that Rohingya refugees are entitled to certain minimum standards of treatment. These expectations function as informal yet effective political pressure, encouraging Indonesia to facilitate UNHCR operations and provide space for necessary humanitarian relief, even in the absence of an explicit legal obligation. Overall, UNHCR's efforts have made a substantial contribution to addressing the urgent needs of Rohingya refugees in Aceh and improving their living conditions. Despite ongoing challenges, including limitations in providing adequate shelter and access to health services, UNHCR's continuous interventions and regular program evaluations demonstrate its commitment to enhancing the humanitarian response and ensuring that Rohingya refugees receive the support they need.

C. Challenges and Strategic Responses of UNHCR in Protecting Rohingya Refugees in Aceh

UNHCR faces challenges in carrying out its mandate to protect Rohingya refugees in Aceh, despite significant efforts to provide assistance and support. These challenges include logistical issues, resource constraints, tensions with local communities, and difficulties in ensuring legal and social protection.⁶⁰

One of the main challenges faced by UNHCR is logistical and infrastructure issues. Rohingya refugees often live in hard-to-access locations with inadequate infrastructure. This condition makes it difficult to distribute food aid, provide clean water, and construct necessary sanitation facilities. Transportation constraints and the lack of adequate facilities can slow down the relief process and reduce the effectiveness of the humanitarian response. In addition, extreme weather and Aceh's geographical conditions often exacerbate these challenges, further complicating the provision of aid.⁶¹

Inadequate infrastructure in several coastal areas of Aceh, combined with UNHCR's operational dependence on a network of local partners with highly variable capacities, creates

⁶⁰ Firdaus Yunus et al., 'Rejection of Rohingya in Aceh: The Role of Ulama and Tolerance in Acehnese Society', *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 3 (2025): 1669–92, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i3.1589>; Lindra Darnela et al., 'The Dominant Influence of Islamic Law in Addressing the Challenges of Upholding the Rights of Rohingya Refugees', *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 17, no. 1 (2025): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v17i1.29885>; Fauzan et al., 'The Importance of Humanistic Dimension in Managing Rohingya Refugees in the Indonesian Western Province of Aceh.'; Darnela et al., 'The Dominant Influence of Islamic Law in Addressing the Challenges of Upholding the Rights of Rohingya Refugees'.

⁶¹ UNHCR, *Annual Report on Refugee Assistance in Aceh*.

systemic inconsistencies in the quality and quantity of assistance received by refugees. As argued by Loescher and Milner⁶² in *Protracted Refugee Situations: Domestic and International Security Implications*, the logistical complexity in handling refugees in developing countries is often worsened by the misalignment between central operational planning and field implementation capacity, thereby creating an implementation gap that directly harms the most vulnerable groups. In the context of Aceh, this implementation gap is manifested in delays in the distribution of basic needs, inconsistencies in access to health services, and uneven reach of emergency education programs for Rohingya refugee children, cumulatively indicating that the existing humanitarian logistics system has not responded to the scale and complexity of the Rohingya refugee crisis in a proportional and systematic manner.

Limited resources are also a major challenge. UNHCR must manage constrained budgets and resources while meeting the growing needs of refugees. Inadequate financing may limit UNHCR's ability to expand aid and protection programs. Limited resources often require UNHCR to make difficult decisions about aid priorities and resource allocation, affecting the scope and quality of assistance provided to refugees.⁶³ The limitations of financial and human resources are structural challenges that fundamentally weaken UNHCR's operational capacity in Aceh, and this issue cannot be separated from the increasingly competitive and uncertain dynamics of global humanitarian funding. UNHCR, as an institution that almost entirely relies on voluntary contributions from donor countries, faces a chronic funding crisis, exacerbated by the increasing number of refugee situations requiring simultaneous attention across various parts of the world, from Syria and Afghanistan to Sudan. Consequently, the allocation of resources for Rohingya refugees in Aceh often does not reflect the actual scale of need.⁶⁴ This situation is compounded by the fact that Indonesia, as a non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, does not fall into the priority funding category for most bilateral donors, causing UNHCR programs in Aceh to operate under chronic and structural budgetary pressure. International organizations such as UNHCR are vulnerable to bureaucratic dysfunction when an expansive normative mandate is not matched by

⁶² Gil Loescher and James Milner, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Domestic and International Security Implications* (Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315020570>.

⁶³ Steffen Angenendt et al., *Growing Needs, Insufficient Resources: How to Fund International Refugee Protection?*, How to Fund International Refugee Protection? (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), 2019), <https://doi.org/10.18449/2019RP13>.

⁶⁴ Frowin Rausis et al., 'UN Refugee Agencies: Vulnerable Funding Structures and a Looming Legitimacy Crisis', *Forced Migration Review*, no. 74 (October 2024): 98–111, <https://www.fmreview.org/financing-displacement-response/rausis-bachelet-lutz/>.

proportional resources, creating conditions in which the institution is forced to make humanitarian triage choices that are ethically problematic and operationally unsustainable in the long term.

Tensions between Rohingya refugees and local communities in Aceh are often a significant challenge.⁶⁵ Cultural differences, limited resources, and feelings of threat can spark conflict and tension between refugees and locals. UNHCR must work diligently to build harmonious relations between refugees and local communities and address potential conflicts. Local community engagement and efforts to promote social integration are important parts of UNHCR's strategy, but they often require additional time and effort to achieve the desired results. The tension with local communities in Aceh represents the most complex and sensitive socio-political dimension of the challenges faced by UNHCR, as it touches on the roots of cultural identity, security perceptions, and competition for limited economic resources among host communities, which themselves are still struggling to recover from the long-term impacts of the armed conflict and the 2004 tsunami disaster.

The rising negative sentiment toward the presence of Rohingya refugees in several coastal communities in Aceh cannot be solely explained as a manifestation of simple xenophobia but must be understood as a response to economic uncertainty, perceptions of injustice in the distribution of international aid, and the failure of strategic communication from UNHCR and the government in explaining the long-term benefits of refugee protection for local communities.⁶⁶ This phenomenon demonstrates that tensions between refugees and host communities tend to increase exponentially when humanitarian interventions are not accompanied by parallel and proportional local community empowerment programs, thereby creating a zero-sum perception in which gains for refugees are perceived as losses for local residents. The failure of UNHCR to proactively and systematically manage these social dynamics not only threatens the sustainability of protection operations in Aceh but also has the potential to trigger social conflict incidents that can be exploited by nationalist political actors to delegitimize the entire framework of international refugee protection in Indonesia.

⁶⁵ Muhammad Havez et al., 'Balancing Local Community Interest and International Responsibilities in the Context of the Expulsion of Rohingya Refugees in Aceh', *Indonesian Journal of International Law* 21, no. 4 (2024): 655–84, <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol21.4.1823>; Yunus et al., 'Rejection of Rohingya in Aceh: The Role of Ulama and Tolerance in Acehese Society'; Darnela et al., 'The Dominant Influence of Islamic Law in Addressing the Challenges of Upholding the Rights of Rohingya Refugees'.

⁶⁶ Syafiq Athoillah and Hendra, 'The Rejection of Rohingya Refugees in Aceh: A Scientific Analysis from Human Rights and Public Policy Perspectives', *Al Mabhats: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Agama* 9, no. 2 (2024): 101–14, <https://doi.org/10.47766/almabhats.v9i2.3392>.

Ensuring legal and social protection for Rohingya refugees is also a major challenge. Many refugees face uncertainty regarding their legal status, which can affect their access to basic services and legal protection. UNHCR works to ensure that refugees' rights are respected and that they receive the protection they need, but this process is often hampered by complex legal systems and bureaucracy.⁶⁷ In addition, social support such as access to health services and education is often limited, making it difficult for refugees to integrate effectively. UNHCR must continuously evaluate the effectiveness of its programs and adapt strategies to better meet the needs of refugees. The difficulty in ensuring legal and social protection for Rohingya refugees in Aceh has become the most fundamental and long-term challenge, as it stems from the absence of a comprehensive domestic legal framework and the ambiguity of refugees' legal status in the Indonesian legal system, which does not formally recognize the category of refugees.⁶⁸

The absence of ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention by Indonesia means that Rohingya refugees in Aceh live in a permanent legal limbo.⁶⁹ They do not have legally recognized work rights, cannot fully access the formal education system, do not have guaranteed freedom of movement, and are always vulnerable to arbitrary detention by immigration authorities operating without clear and standardized protection guidelines. In this context, UNHCR can only act as a de facto protector without adequate de jure legal authority to impose minimum protection standards on Indonesian authorities, making the protection provided fragile, contingent, and highly vulnerable to political policy changes that can drastically alter protection conditions at any time. The dependence of the refugee protection system on the domestic legal framework of the host country, without an effective international enforcement mechanism, creates a situation in which the quality of protection received by refugees depends on the local government's political will rather than on an erga omnes international legal obligation. This systematically places Rohingya refugees in Aceh in a highly vulnerable and continuously unprotected legal position.

⁶⁷ Rohaida Nordin et al., 'Ineffective Refugee Status Determination Process: Hindrance to Durable Solution for Refugees Rights and Protection', *Indonesia Law Review* 11, no. 1 (n.d.): 73–91, <https://doi.org/10.15742/ilrev.v11n1.687>.

⁶⁸ Chalik Mawardi and Farah Hanum, 'Policy on the Management of Rohingya Refugees in Aceh: State Sovereignty versus Justice?', *Journal of Law, Environmental and Justice* 1, no. 2 (2023): 122–36, <https://doi.org/10.62264/jlej.v1i2.7>.

⁶⁹ M. Yakub Aiyub Kadir et al., 'The Legal Vacuum on Access to Higher Education for Refugees in Indonesia: Islamic Claim for Aceh Responsibility', *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 (2023): 522–54, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i1.15454>; Heru Susetyo and Paul Chambers, 'Repatriation for Rohingya Asylum Seekers in Indonesia: A Durable but Almost Impossible Solution', *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 48, no. 1 (2020): 63–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00927678.2020.1833414>.

The absence of ratification of the 1951 Convention represents the law in books, while the urgent and tangible need for protection in the face of thousands of lives at risk represents the law in action, which cannot be postponed by the limitations of formal legal documents. Progressive law criticizes the bureaucratic mentality that treats formal rules as an end rather than as an instrument. Progressive law requires the opposite: legal actors, such as government officials and law enforcement officers, must have the moral courage to interpret and implement the law creatively to ensure substantive justice is realized, even when the available legal texts do not explicitly mandate it. This is evident in the local community's interactions with refugees; existing law provides written regulations but has not yet delivered benefits through progressive implementation in society. The functional dimension, combined with the narrative of national protection for refugees, reveals the absence of Indonesian law in addressing global upheavals and in protecting local communities to prevent prolonged social tensions between refugees and host communities.

The evaluation process involves collecting data from the field regarding the program's impact and refugee satisfaction. However, challenges in accurate data collection and implementation of feedback often hinder program improvement and adjustment. These difficulties require a more adaptive and responsive approach to enhance the quality of assistance provided. In the face of these challenges, UNHCR must continue to adapt and find innovative solutions to ensure that its protection mandate for Rohingya refugees can be effectively implemented. Continuous evaluation and program adjustments are key to improving responses and meeting the urgent needs of refugees in Aceh.

UNHCR faces significant challenges in carrying out its mandate to protect Rohingya refugees in Aceh, despite considerable relief and support efforts. Key challenges include logistical issues, resource constraints, tensions with local communities, and difficulties in ensuring legal and social protection. Logistics and infrastructure problems are a major obstacle. Rohingya refugees often live in hard-to-access locations with inadequate infrastructure, making it difficult to distribute food aid, provide clean water, and build sanitation facilities. Transportation constraints, as well as geographic and extreme weather conditions, exacerbate these challenges, slowing the relief process and reducing the effectiveness of the humanitarian response.

Limited resources are also a significant challenge. UNHCR must manage a limited budget while meeting the growing needs of refugees. Inadequate financing can limit the expansion of aid and protection programs. Limited resources often force UNHCR to prioritize aid allocation, affecting the scope and quality of aid provided. The structural insufficiency of humanitarian

logistics in conflict-affected and geographically isolated locations like Aceh is more than an operational nuisance; it represents a fundamental systemic failing that reveals the intrinsic fragility of the global refugee protection architecture. Transportation constraints, combined with seasonal monsoons, coastal flooding, and inadequate road infrastructure in remote areas of Aceh, result in what humanitarian logistics scholars refer to as "last-mile delivery failures," a condition in which aid resources exist in sufficient quantities at central distribution points but fail to reach the most vulnerable refugee populations in peripheral settlements. The UNHCR Statute's non-discriminatory humanitarian assistance concept, as well as the broader body of international humanitarian law, is fundamentally undermined by this dichotomy of abundance at the center and scarcity at the periphery. According to Corbett et al.⁷⁰, the capacity of logistical systems to guarantee the timely, equitable, and dignified delivery of aid to those in greatest need is crucial to the effectiveness of humanitarian operations. This capacity is clearly insufficient in the Acehnese context given its archipelagic geography and climate vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, the already fragile legal position of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, combined with geographic isolation and severe weather, creates compounded vulnerability that current humanitarian frameworks are structurally ill-equipped to handle. Rohingya refugees living in coastal and semi-rural reception facilities in Aceh are disproportionately vulnerable to the dual threat of environmental hazards and institutional neglect, in contrast to refugees in urban settings who maintain some access to markets, civil society networks, and informal support systems. In addition to disrupting supply chains and medical evacuations, the Indian Ocean monsoon season, which intensifies between October and April, renders temporary shelters structurally inadequate, putting refugees at risk of respiratory infections, waterborne illnesses, and psychological trauma caused by repeated displacement. The lack of a comprehensive national disaster risk reduction framework that specifically includes refugee populations exacerbates this environmental precarity. As a result, Rohingya refugees in Aceh face a legal and institutional blind spot, remaining unprotected by both Indonesia's domestic emergency response mechanisms and the full operational mandate of UNHCR's field operations.

UNHCR in Aceh operates in a chronic vacuum of regional support, bearing the burden of humanitarian response alone without proportional assistance from neighboring countries or the international community. The core of Indonesia's operational challenges in Aceh stems from the

⁷⁰ Charles J. Corbett et al., 'Sustainable Humanitarian Operations: An Integrated Perspective', *Production and Operations Management* 31, no. 12 (2022): 4393–406, <https://doi.org/10.1111/poms.13848>.

lack of historical support from the international community, regional partners, and the central government—a long-standing deficit. Although regional cooperation has made progress, particularly with the activation of the Bali Process Consultation Mechanism at the eighth Bali Process Ministerial Conference in February 2023, this has yet to translate into a clear path toward a better response to the increased maritime movement of refugees. Consequently, UNHCR and Indonesia, particularly the Acehnese community, bear nearly the entire burden of Rohingya refugee arrivals, while resettlement countries and wealthy donor nations contribute only marginally. This disproportionate burden-sharing erodes UNHCR's operational capacity in Aceh, as available resources are never commensurate with the scale of the increasing challenges posed by refugees from Bangladesh.

Tensions between Rohingya refugees and local communities in Aceh also represent a significant issue. Cultural differences and perceptions of limited resources can trigger conflicts. UNHCR must work diligently to build harmonious relations and address potential conflicts, with a focus on social integration and local community engagement. Ensuring legal and social protection remains another major challenge. Many refugees face uncertainty over their legal status, which affects access to basic services and legal protection. Complex legal processes and bureaucracy often hinder the fulfillment of refugee rights.

These challenges are exacerbated by an organized and systematic digital disinformation attack that emerged in Indonesia from late 2023 to 2024. For the first time in UNHCR's history, a flood of hate messages targeted both Rohingya refugees and the agency itself, accompanied by fake social media accounts posing as UNHCR to spread disinformation. This challenge extends beyond the usual public opinion issues between refugees and local communities. The campaign of disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech targeting Rohingya refugees and UNHCR has resulted in tangible impacts on the ground, including denial of refugee ship landings (pushbacks), demonstrations, mob attacks, forced relocations of refugees, and personal threats against UNHCR staff. This situation also generates online threats and real risks to the safety of staff, draining operational capacity in areas entirely outside UNHCR's humanitarian mandate.

The securitization narrative of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia is gradually transforming the humanitarian framing into a national security framing. Linking refugee arrivals with transnational criminal networks and advocating for stricter law enforcement constrains UNHCR's operational space, as refugees are increasingly represented not as victims of persecution but as security threats requiring management, undermining the justification for UNHCR's presence as a purely humanitarian actor. This ambivalence places UNHCR in a difficult position, operating under

conditional government tolerance, without adequate legal certainty, and amid growing domestic political pressure to adopt more repressive measures toward refugees.

Access to social services such as health and education is also often limited, hindering effective integration. To address these challenges, UNHCR must continue to adapt and develop innovative solutions. Continuous evaluation and program adjustments are essential to improving response and meeting the urgent needs of refugees in Aceh. The evaluation process involves collecting accurate data and implementing feedback to enhance the quality of assistance. UNHCR must continue to develop adaptive and responsive strategies to ensure that its protection mandate is effectively implemented.

D. Conclusion

Despite operating within a legally constrained framework, UNHCR has played an indispensable humanitarian role in Aceh. For Rohingya refugees who might otherwise have faced arbitrary detention, refoulement, or deprivation of basic services, UNHCR has ensured a minimum threshold of human dignity by providing emergency food assistance, clean water, sanitation, psychosocial support, and identity registration. Moreover, UNHCR has acted as a structural architect of a de facto protection ecosystem by training local authorities, collaborating with the Indonesian government under Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016, and fostering social capital between Acehnese communities and refugees. The legitimacy of this operational presence does not rely on Indonesia's ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention but rests on a layered constellation of legal foundations: the UNHCR Statute under UN General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of 1950, Indonesia's erga omnes obligations under the ICCPR and ICESCR, the jus cogens status of the non-refoulement principle, the constitutional mandate in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution to uphold world order and peace, the non-derogable rights in Article 28I of the amended constitution, and decades of consistent state practice forming binding customary international law. From a progressive legal perspective, UNHCR's presence in Aceh exemplifies the principle that law exists for people, not the reverse, demonstrating a refusal to let the absence of a ratified text justify the denial of human dignity.

The challenges facing UNHCR in Aceh are systemic and mutually reinforcing rather than incidental. The lack of a comprehensive national refugee law creates a permanent legal limbo, leaving protection fragile and dependent on shifting political will. This legal vacuum is compounded by chronic deficits in international burden-sharing, with Indonesia and the Acehnese community bearing the bulk of responsibility while resettlement countries and major donors

contribute minimally. Coordinated disinformation campaigns targeting both Rohingya refugees and UNHCR have further destabilized the environment. For the first time in its history, UNHCR has faced systematic online doxing and impersonation, resulting in actual violence, pushbacks, and direct threats to field staff. The pervasive activity of human smuggling networks, which exploit protection gaps, further blurs the distinction between refugees and trafficking victims and undermines the accuracy of status determination procedures. Collectively, these challenges indicate that safeguarding Rohingya refugees in Aceh requires fundamental reforms, including equitable burden-sharing agreements, a robust multi-stakeholder counter-disinformation strategy, and Indonesia's political commitment to convert constitutional obligations into a comprehensive national refugee law.

The most urgent structural reform is the enactment of a National Refugee Law. This domestic legislation should formally define refugee status, codify the principle of non-refoulement, establish a national Refugee Status Determination (RSD) mechanism co-managed with UNHCR, and grant refugees limited but defined rights to work, education, and freedom of movement. This should take priority over full ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which faces strong domestic opposition. Such a law aligns with the constitutional mandate in the 1945 Constitution and operationalizes the non-derogable rights framework of Article 28I without necessitating the politically costly step of Convention ratification. Presidential Regulation No. 125 of 2016 can serve as a transitional foundation, but it must be elevated to full parliamentary statute to provide the legal certainty and institutional durability currently lacking in UNHCR operations in Aceh.

To directly address local community resistance, UNHCR should implement a Community Resilience and Economic Co-benefit Program in Aceh. This initiative would shift perceptions of refugee presence from a zero-sum burden to a mutually beneficial development opportunity. Practically, the program should allocate a specific percentage of international humanitarian funding—ideally at least 20% of operational budgets in Aceh—toward infrastructure and economic benefits for the host community, such as shared public facilities, vocational training programs accessible to both local youth and refugees, and micro-enterprise grants for Acehnese companies employing refugees under monitored, rights-compliant conditions. This approach aligns with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) under the 2016 New York Declaration and Indonesia's National Medium-Term Development Plan. By tangibly demonstrating that hosting refugees can generate local benefits, UNHCR can weaken the social

foundation of disinformation campaigns and securitization narratives, creating a more durable and politically sustainable protection environment for Rohingya refugees in Aceh.

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