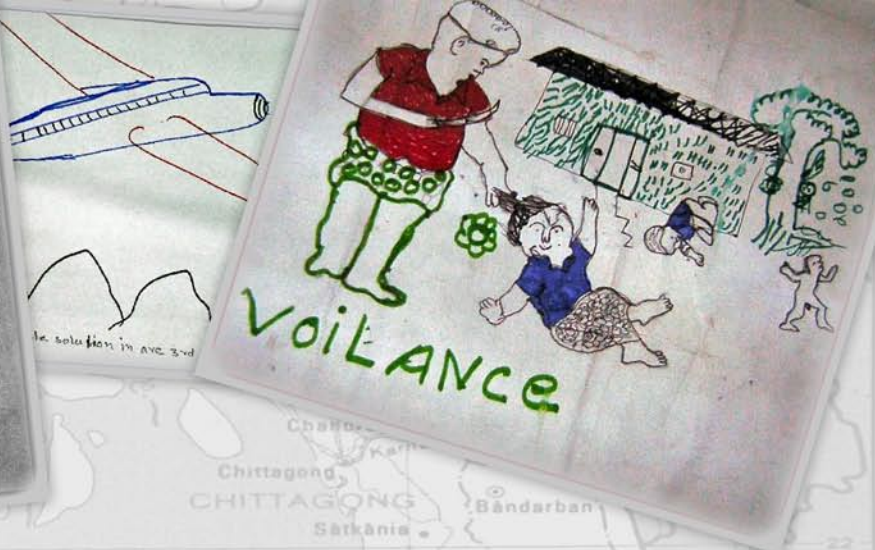


*we want to same right.*



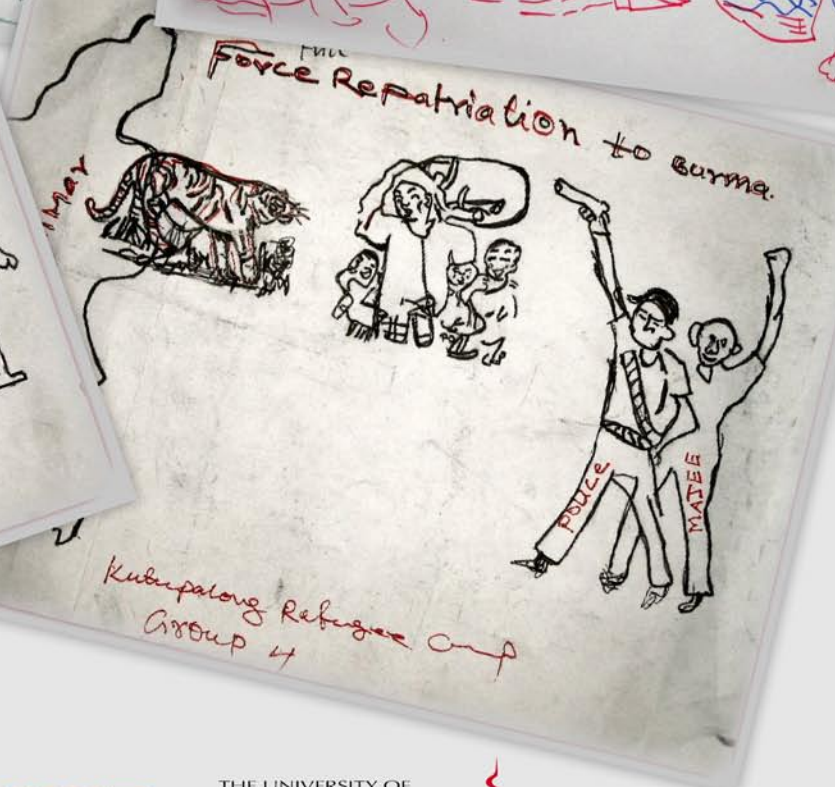
# Refugee Consultations Bangladesh

March 2007

Mouths of the Ganges  
Bay of Bengal



*Torture Between 2 Countries*





## Refugee consultations in Bangladesh – March 2007



This report summarises the outcome of consultations held in March 2007 with refugees from Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar in the two refugee camps of Nayapara and Kutupalong in Bangladesh. To preserve confidentiality, details of individual refugee stories may have been slightly changed.



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## TABLE OF KEY EVENTS

1948	First refugee influx.
1974	Muslims in Northern Rakhine State are given Foreign instead of National Registration Cards.
1978	'Dragon King' operation in Myanmar causes second refugee influx (200,000 persons). 180,000 returned (including by force), 10,000 die in camps and some 10,000 remain in Bangladesh.
1992	Third refugee influx with 250,000 persons hosted in 21 camps in Bangladesh.
1992	Initial repatriation without UNHCR involvement, reported to be forced.
1994	UNHCR stops individual volrep interviews in August 1994, as thousands return to Myanmar each week. After this date reports of forced repatriation increase.
1997-1998	Following armed overnight round-up in July 1997 and deportation of 350 persons, refugees start a strike and refuse humanitarian assistance. The strike ends in 1998 with the arrest of many refugees.
2003-2004	Refugees sign repatriation affidavits under duress resulting in a new wave of forced repatriation with violence against those opposing it and many refugees in hiding. Refugee families are split. MSF leaves.
June 2004	Refugees in Kutupalong demand democracy in Myanmar, written guarantees against forcible repatriation, and removal of mahjees. In protest against a midnight raid made by the CIC, who arrested some refugees and physically abused one of the refugees' wife and children refugees stage a hunger strike and boycotted camp activities. Authorities issued arrest warrants for 49 refugees. Most arrest orders were rescinded following UNHCR intervention.
Nov. 2004	Protests in Kutupalong following the arrest of one of the leaders of the refugee 'protest group'. 3 refugees killed, over 100 injured and at least 43 arrested and reports of women and girls being raped.

## INTRODUCTION

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### **Executive Committee Conclusion on Women and Girls at Risk**

In follow up to the UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion on Women and Girls at Risk in 2006, UNHCR joined forces with the University of New South Wales Centre for Refugee Research and the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture to build on previous work undertaken by both institutions in relation to refugees. The purpose of the pilot project was to field test a community based and individual assessment methodology for the early identification of those persons most at risk and traumatised in a refugee community, particularly women and girls, to improve protection, prevention, responses and solutions.

UNHCR Bangladesh kindly accepted to host the pilot project. The aim of the UNHCR Office is to use the information gathered to ensure the refugees' perspective into a comprehensive plan that is being developed jointly by the Office with key stakeholders with a view to finding durable solutions to the situation of the refugees from Northern Rakhine State in Bangladesh.

As the report will highlight in detail, one of the main findings of this exercise was that the particular risks faced by women and girls permeated each and every aspect of camp life. Therefore, a conscious decision was taken not to reduce this area of concern to a single chapter of the report, but rather to reflect women and girls at risk as a red thread throughout the whole report. Moreover, looking at camp life through a women at risk lens, allowed the team to unveil grave protection concerns faced by the camp population as a whole.

This pilot was only possible due to the willingness of the refugee women and men in the Nayapara and Kutupalong camps who were prepared to share not only their worst experiences and fears, but also their biggest hopes and desires for a change in their situation. The pilot team wishes to thank all of them for their openness and courage to speak up. Particular appreciation must go to the UNHCR team in Cox's Bazaar and Dhaka for their incredible flexibility and support in receiving such a large and ambitious expedition. Their insights and feedback on the process have been invaluable and have already helped to introduce improvements to the methodology.

### **Background**

UNHCR established its presence in Bangladesh in 1992 upon invitation of the Government of Bangladesh to assist in the repatriation of over 250,000 refugees from Northern Rakhine State who fled to Bangladesh during 1991-1992. Over the course of more than a decade, UNHCR assisted the repatriation of 236,526 persons since the beginning of the operation- some 95% of the original influx. Today, there are some 26,317 refugees clustered around two camps of the original twenty refugee camps established in Bangladesh.

The refugees participating in the pilot project came from the two remaining camps, Nayapara and Kutupalong. These camps host 26,000 refugees who were brought together from the initial 20 camps as over 236,000 refugees repatriated. Almost 45 % of the refugee population was born in the refugee camps in Bangladesh.

These camps are based on government-designated land and are closed areas, but they are located very close to local villages. In the case of Kutupalong, the relationship with the local villagers and a local man who actually owns part of the land on which the camp is situated is particularly complicated, as he appears to exercise some control over what happens in the area. This has a serious impact on the refugees' security, particularly for young girls, and in itself creates a protection risk.



In terms of the roles and responsibilities of the different actors in the camps, the Bangladesh Government is responsible for the administration of the camps and the security of the refugees. The Government has designated the Ministry for Disaster and Relief Management as the main Ministry responsible. All UNHCR activities need to be undertaken in cooperation with the Ministry and agreement of the Government. Furthermore, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR, which governs UNHCR's role has focused on support for repatriation. This has hampered many efforts to undertake a broader approach to improve the protection of refugees.

The World Food Programme is responsible for food distribution in the camps and for ensuring appropriate distribution and monitoring of the programme. It works through the national Red Crescent Society which has volunteers, refugee and local, running the programme.

With the departure of MSF and CONCERN by the end of 2004, the ability of UNHCR to deliver assistance through inter-agency collaboration was significantly reduced. It also left a serious gap in the delivery of health services and education, sanitation and community development. Subsequently, UNHCR engaged a quasi-government organization; Technical Assistance Inc. (TAI) which is responsible for providing skills training in the camps, education and forestry. With regard to health, the in-patient service will henceforth be taken over by MSF who have agreed to resume their programme in the camps, while the government retains responsibility for referrals. Recently, UNHCR approved an additional funding of US\$ 880,000 to improve refugees' overall health and nutrition conditions. This includes sufficient supplies of medicines, provision of laboratory equipment and ambulance services.

## **Methodology and participants**

The pilot comprised of two steps: a four day community based consultation and a two day testing of an assessment tool to identify persons at heightened risk. The consultations and interviews were undertaken directly in the Nayapara and Kutupalong camps. This process enabled the team to undertake a situation analysis of the protection risks, community capacities and proposed solutions with the community. Consultations were held with groups of some 30 women and men in each camp (120 individuals in all), over 85 % of whom were drawn from a list of persons cleared for repatriation. The methodology focused on eliciting from the women and men the history of their flight, the protection risks they face in their current living conditions, the coping mechanisms they have developed and what potential solutions they see for the future, as well as their views on who is most at risk in the community. This was undertaken in the context of a human rights framework, with particular emphasis on the rights of women and girls. The consultations were followed by two days of individual interviews with 80 refugees drawn from a wider group in the camps, selected among high-risk profiles (e.g. refugees with disabilities, families with persons in prison). The individual interviews were conducted using a risk assessment tool which also looked at the history of flight, the current situation, and the trauma effects of these experiences and coping capacities in order to identify those most at risk.

The group consultations were experienced differently across the two camps and genders, but a number of commonalities were also identified and are summarized in the report. Both women and men expressed real fear of reprisals for having participated in the consultations and described how if they approached UNHCR the refugee block leaders (*Mahjees*) would follow them and intimidate them, the Mahjees also insinuating that they were not afraid of UNHCR. Despite their fears, the refugees reiterated on numerous occasions their need to speak out and tell their stories.

This report provides a brief summary of the analysis undertaken by the refugees of their past and current situation and their hopes for the future followed by observations and suggestions from the project team. It is divided into eight sections which touch upon statelessness, repatriation, life in Bangladesh (including

safety, family life, education, health and food security) and resettlement. The particular risks faced by women and girls are a central component throughout the different chapters of the report.

The situation is further illustrated by examples of storyboards which the refugee women and men developed in groups to represent their history, main concerns and ideas on solutions to the current problems, as well as some sample individual case summaries. A timeline highlights those events which have had a significant impact on the physical and emotional well being and protection of the refugees in Nayapara and Kutupalong. These events have seriously affected the refugees' ability to consider any proposed solutions.

A fuller analysis of the individual assessments will be undertaken to identify the risk factors and how the cumulative effects of pre-arrival history, camp experience and trauma contribute to heightened risk. These factors can be incorporated into both immediate responses which will be discussed among the various stakeholders.

### **The perspectives of refugee women and men**

The consultation and the individual interviews provided the refugee women and men of different age groups and diverse circumstances an opportunity to share their personal situations, their protection concerns, ideas to improve the situation and their hopes and fears. The consultation phase also provided the refugees with an opportunity to indicate whom they considered most at risk in the community. Those groups most frequently highlighted were: young women without parents and other vulnerable young women, particularly those abducted and who later returned to the camp pregnant, older persons with no safe place to live or without family support, adult children or carers, orphaned or separated children, women with no men to support or protect them, women with relatives in prison, women in prison, unregistered refugees who returned after forced repatriation, people on the 'cleared' list, women who have been subject to sexual violence, those in prison falsely accused and persons with disabilities.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Consultations were held in Bangladesh with refugees from Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar in March 2007 using a community based and individual assessment methodology for the early identification of refugees most at risk and traumatised, particularly women and girls. The consultations included four-day sessions with groups of some 30 women and men in the Nayapara and Kutupalong refugee camps (120 individuals in total) as well as some 80 individual interviews. This report reflects the main protection concerns identified by men and women of diverse age and background, and presents their ideas to improve the situation.

The group consultation process demonstrated the value of group interventions aimed at supporting refugees by providing a space where they could tell their stories. A method called "Story Boarding" was used. Refugees worked in small groups and drew pictures of their experiences of persecution in Myanmar, flight to Bangladesh and life in the refugee camps. These were presented to a larger audience, including UNHCR staff and non-governmental organisations. These pictures are used throughout the report and full versions are contained in Appendix 1.

A high level of individual trauma was evident. The compounded trauma present in all of those with whom the team engaged underscored the urgent need for a community based psychosocial programme to support the current efforts of UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh to address the past experiences and provide protection and solutions for the refugees.

The consultations gave a full picture of the paralysing impact of violence and corruption experienced by refugees in both Myanmar and Bangladesh and revealed the pervasive lack of security in Bangladesh.

Refugees described the forced repatriation movements in Bangladesh up until the end of 2004. The different measures used to send them back are still present in their minds and a very real fear of future forced repatriations persists. The impact of past forced repatriations and of return being the only allowed long-term option has undermined their ability to contribute to finding solutions. Prospects for voluntary repatriation appear very limited, particularly among those refugees who are on the list of persons who were cleared for return by the Myanmar authorities, as many of them were subject to forced repatriation attempts in the past. Citizenship is seen as an essential part of any future solution. Both refugee women and men equate resettlement or relocation to another secure place in Bangladesh as the only possibility to escape from the insecurity, violence and fear they are facing as well as to be able to work, study and move freely.

Women and men described a system of camp control run by the camp administration, police and refugee block leaders (Mahjees) which is sustained by and in turn sustains intrigue, false accusations, mistrust, bribery, corruption, fear and violence and the ultimate threat of ending up in prison. The refugees' primary concern was to change the Mahjee system and to have fair refugee representation. In some cases men were put in prison to enable the Mahjee to pursue their 'beautiful young daughters'. Women reported that at night villagers, police and guards in plain clothes would go to the sheds to target young beautiful women. They said the men would rape the girls and threaten their fathers and brothers with beatings and false allegations which would result in imprisonment if the rapes were reported.

Women and men, older and younger, saw education as the main hope for their future and called for access to education, since the education system stops at grade 5 and only includes Burmese, Mathematics and English. They described how young people were beaten if they went to private schools in the camps to get better education. Family values are seriously undermined and family unity eroded by forced separation, imprisonment of husbands, confined space and violence. The young women and men

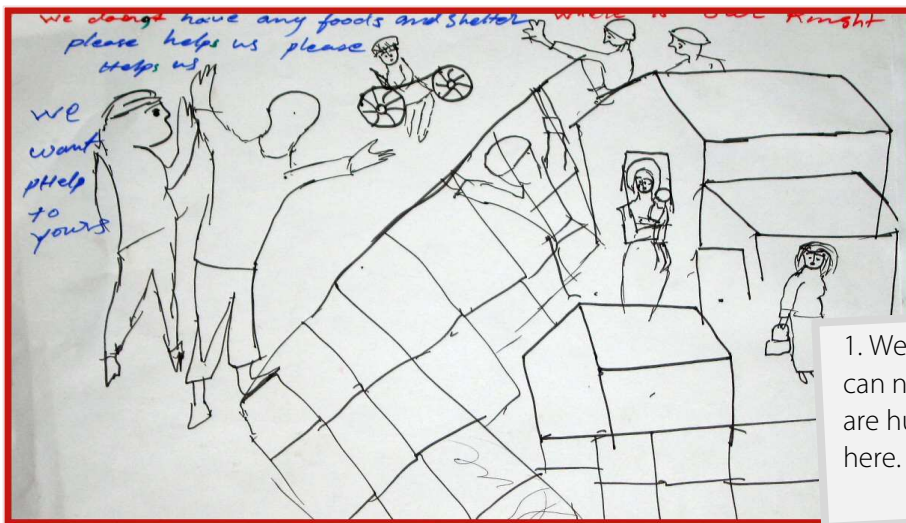
raised their concerns that the current situation in the camp left them with no prospects for a future and they described a life without structure and dominated by violence.

Substandard living conditions and inadequate food combined with violence cause disease and ill health. Significant health concerns, both physical and mental, were reported. The refugees spoke of inadequate treatment and reported abuse, corruption, and disrespectful attitudes by medical staff. They welcomed the return of Medicine Sans Frontier (MSF) who had left in 2003 when refugees were pressured to return. Parents described their frustration and helplessness at not being able to resolve the health problems of their children, particularly those suffering from serious longer-term illnesses and disabilities. The psychological health of children in the camps is of particular concern to refugees.

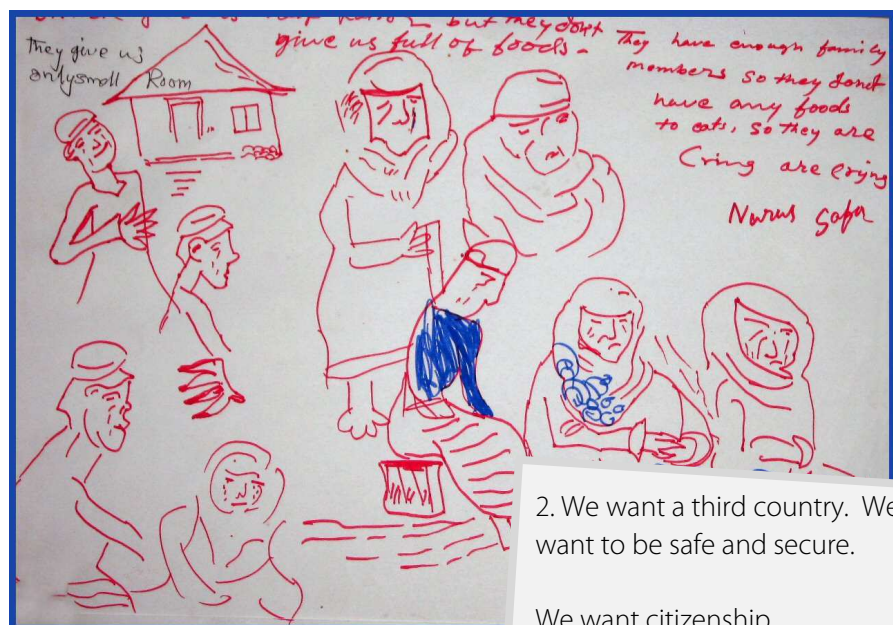
Refugees repeatedly described how the already insufficient food rations were reduced further due to corruption at distribution, the family book system, and removal of rations as a punishment, including for those who had refused to repatriate, and how the absence of food combined with no right to work exposed refugees to protection risks. The high risks of unregistered refugees living in the camp without any access to food rations or non-food items were highlighted. Refugees explained that food rations are sold to purchase medication, kerosene and clothing, pay bribes, and be able to visit relatives in jail. The solutions suggested by refugees included the possibility to work and move out of the camps as well as a fairer food distribution system.

Breaking the cycle of corruption and violence, granting refugees freedom of movement, the right to work, and access to mainstream health and education facilities, protection from rape, abduction and sexual exploitation, providing relief from trauma and building up the capacity of the community to prevent and resolve disputes in a peaceful manner are some building blocks identified for a strategy to resolve the situation of refugees from Northern Rakhine State in Bangladesh.

## STATELESS AND REFUGEE

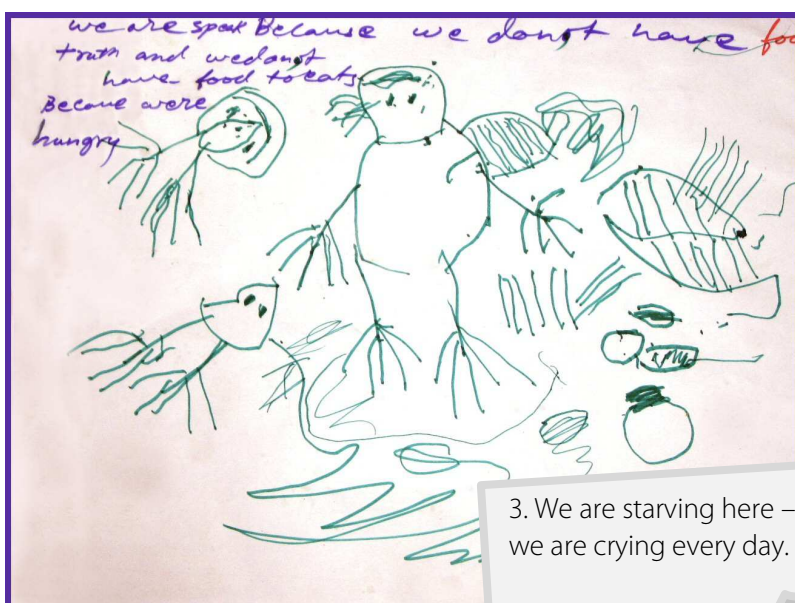


1. We don't have a country we can not earn food. The children are hungry. There is no life for us here.

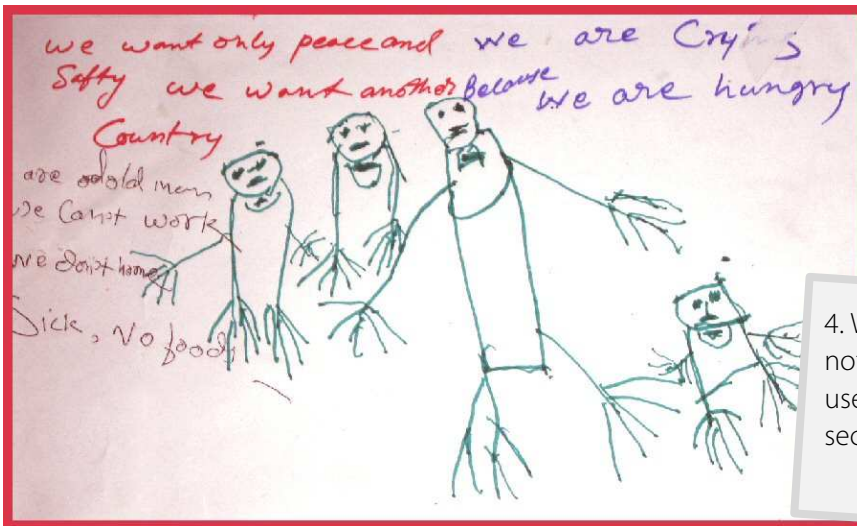


2. We want a third country. We want to be safe and secure.

We want citizenship.



3. We are starving here – we are crying every day.



4. We need food but we do not have cooking pots. What use is food if we do not have security? We can not work.

5. We have no food or proper shelter. It is a terrible prison and there is no future. Please help us.



6. We want only peace, to be able to work. We are humans. We want another country where we can be citizens.

## Stateless and Refugee

*"We are like a deer between two tigers"*

*"We want citizenship somewhere"*

### Issues presented by refugees

The refugee women and men explained how the denial of citizenship in Myanmar left them with little hope for the future as they are not able to exercise their rights or have recourse to the protection and security that accompanies citizenship. One woman described the situation in Myanmar: *"In Burma the army is telling us we have no rights to stay as (we are) not citizens in Burma. 'You are the guest in this country' – so we have to go."* A few older women said: *We have no soil beneath our feet. We belong no-where.*

They described how they have had their lands confiscated and suffered eviction from their homes: *"You are from Bangladesh – don't know how you came here – but you have to leave... you are not Burmese people, you have no rights [...]"* Refugees were imprisoned, tortured and made to take part in forced labour. Many reported that forced labour involved working people to exhaustion, with those unable to continue being beaten, sometimes to death. One woman said that her husband had been killed when he became too weak to work productively. Other women told how the men were forced to work far from their villages and families.

Their Islamic religion and identity as Muslims were also targeted for persecution. They told of their mosques being burnt (*in Arakan, people destroyed 50 mosques*) and how the beards of Imams' were burnt.

I have four options in Myanmar:

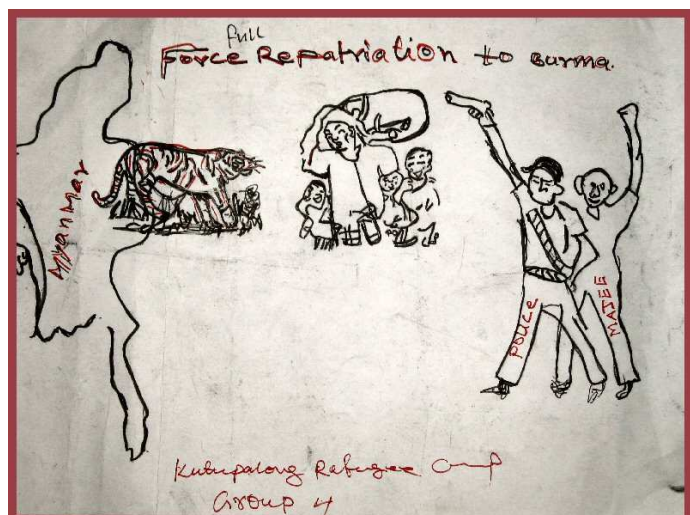
1. to be killed by Burmese army,
2. to be raped,
3. to have the army take their instruments, household goods, tools, animals etc -
4. or to go to Bangladesh.

(Description by one woman.)

The stories they presented underscored their frustration at having no identity or belonging in the legal sense. *"If we aren't Burmese who are we?"* Many of the refugees have had no contact with their families in Myanmar. This reality was further compounded by past displacements experienced by many families in 1948 and 1978.

The refugees repeatedly expressed the hope for a 'safe place' where they could live in peace and which provided the security for them to rebuild their lives. *"From this time we are facing so many problems- you showed us many pictures of rights – we don't have them – we want rights. We have no rights to education, to live happily, to food, medicine etc."* Safety and security were seen as fundamental to any solution, which the current camp environment does not provide.

Rather some describe being treated with hostility by the local population in Bangladesh: *"why have you come from Burma to beg."*



## **Solutions proposed by refugees**

Refugees have noted that the history of repeated displacement, trauma, and up to 15 years in a camp – in which they have no trust in the camp authorities, and have been prohibited from forming their own representative organisations – has undermined their ability to contribute to finding solutions for themselves: *“To have a secure place to live in peace; It’s up to Allah where that is.”* The psychological impact of being unable to have the authority to live their lives and build a future for their children, in particular, was something that was cited by many refugees during the consultations as a primary concern.

The refugees urged UNHCR to advocate for the Rohingya to obtain citizenship: *I will go back to Burma when they give me citizenship and security.* It was difficult for them to see any solutions without access to this basic human right. Citizenship is seen as the means to obtain basic human security.

Refugees saw the need for a fundamental change in attitude also by the Bangladeshi government. As refugees in Bangladesh, they continue to be without rights or safety. *“We want the protection of the law in Bangladesh – we want our human rights. In the same way that we have to respect the laws of Bangladesh – we want them to respect our rights.”*

The rights and protection associated with citizenship are particularly pertinent for groups such as the very young and the elderly: *“When I came from Burma I was 2 years old. I wasn’t able to fight against Burmese to say that I am a citizen of Burma. [...] My parents are so much older now but they have to live [...] so they need a safe place to live. Never seen or heard of peace in Bangladesh. They need peace. They are hoping that if you help them they will be happy [...]”*

## **Team observations/suggestions**

The pervasive lack of security renders the refugees overwhelmed by the multiplicity of problems facing them. The combination of being both stateless and refugees has compounded the refugees’ feelings of being unprotected and the reality, despite their refugee status, has reinforced this perception. *“To have a secure place to live in peace; It’s up to Allah where that is.”* The impact of years of being without citizenship in Myanmar, their systematic persecution and the uncertainty and lack of safety in Bangladesh heightens the sense of injustice for the refugees.

More recently a very pro-active approach has been adopted by UNHCR to address the problems. One action initiated by UNHCR in Bangladesh has been to promote the registration of births by UNICEF as part of its national campaign and if this is implemented in the near future it will provide a good example of the potential for some small changes to take place.

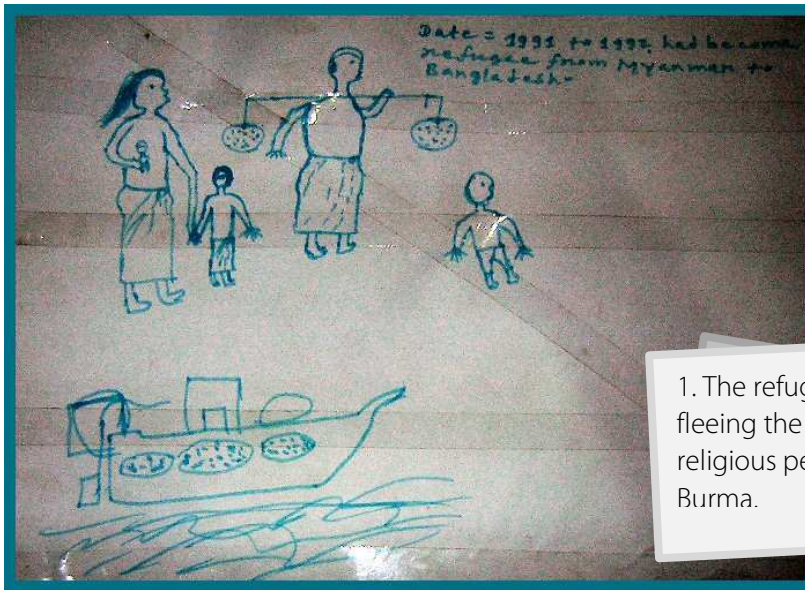
Understandably, the Bangladeshi government regard the costs of maintaining and supporting the refugees as being difficult for an already overstretched economy. It may also be true to say that the situation of many Bangladeshis is economically perilous and that many local people are without access to services to meet basic needs such as education, health, food security and income support. The additional burden, however, of being stateless and without some of the basic rights is a psychological cost that weighs heavily on the refugees.

This lack of security contributes to the vulnerability of the situation and the sensitivity to discussions around the future, in particular repatriation. Repatriation means a return not only to a position of statelessness and therefore, no rights or authority in their homeland, but also a general loss of contact with the outside world. The experiences of being without rights and at the mercy of the government forces contribute to high levels of anxiety.

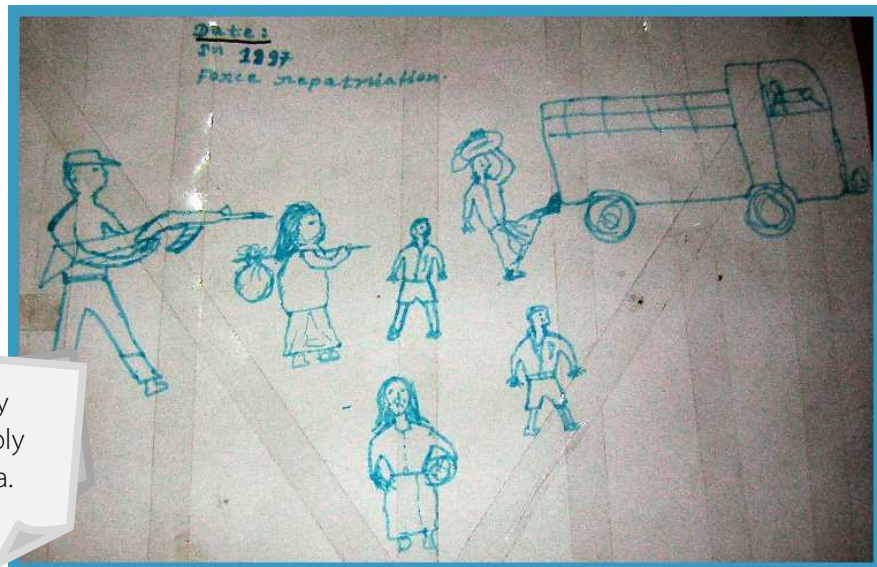


This situation will present particular challenges in supporting the community to move beyond the current situation to focus on a variety of longer term achievable solutions. Given their statelessness status, the desire for citizenship and respect for their rights often makes moving to a third country the only apparent solution for many of the refugees.

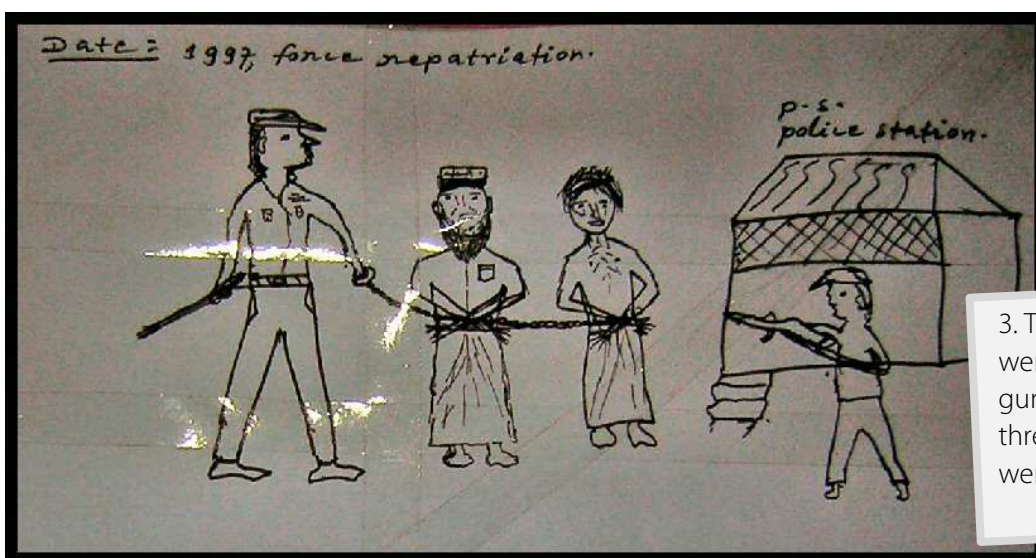
## PERSPECTIVES ON REPATRIATION



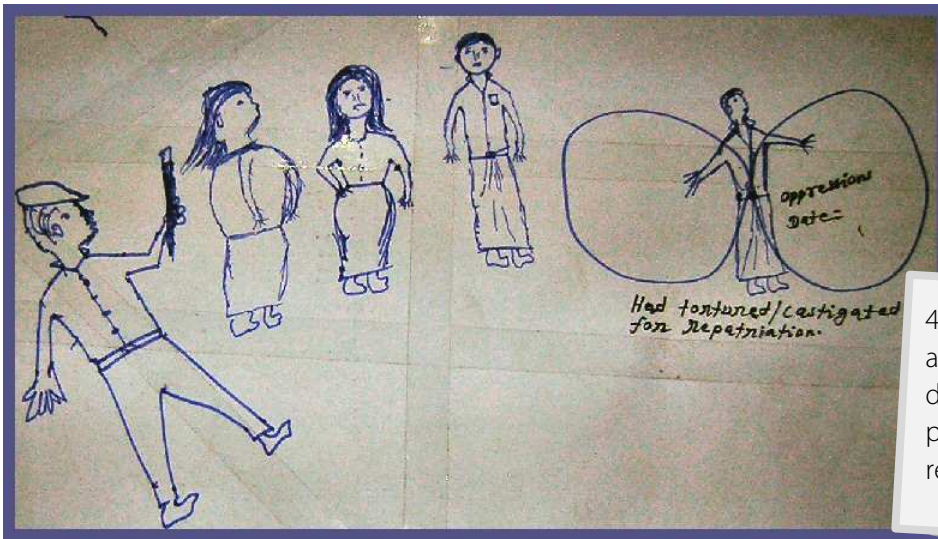
1. The refugee family is fleeing the violence and religious persecution in Burma.



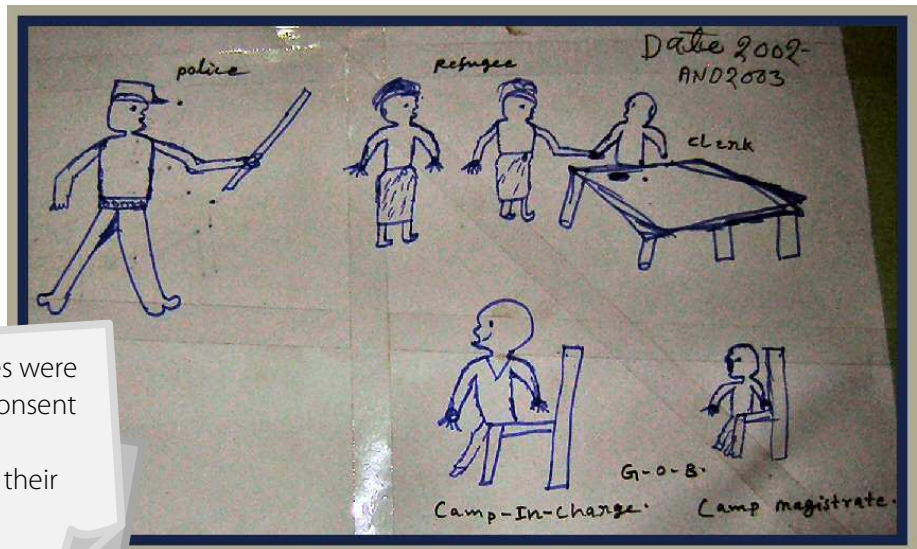
2. During 1997 many refugees were forcibly repatriated to Burma.



3. Those who resisted were rounded up at gunpoint, beaten, threatened and many were killed.



4. Walking around and around a figure of eight symbol from dawn to dusk was used as punishment for those who refused to repatriate.



5. Many refugees were forced to sign consent agreements to repatriate using their thumb prints.



6. Many refugees were threatened, arrested and beaten by police when they had protested at MSF's eviction from the camp.

## Perspectives on Repatriation

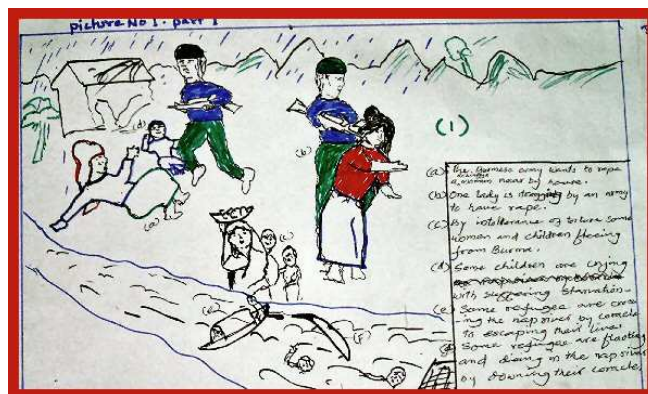
*"We can return if you give us citizenship and our land back"*

*"What have we done to be forced to live like this?"*

*"My life is ruined, my life is finished. I have grandchildren, I would rather see them drown or burn than have a life as bad as mine"*

### Issues presented by refugees

Throughout the consultations and the interviews the refugees described events in Myanmar that were testament to the systematic persecution and exposure to human rights violations on a wide scale. In describing the history of their flights from Myanmar, the women and men in both camps shared stories of multiple displacements, rape of girls and women, beatings of men, women and children, detention, torture, forced labour as well as confiscation of their land and property. One



man described how his son was forcibly repatriated and *"was taken for forced labour and died as he could not carry big loads"*. Another man described how his father *"was taken for forced labour but because he couldn't carry the load he was shot and killed. We received his body back after three days."* And another man: *"One of my sons was detained for long time. He died as a result of forced labour."*

There were many accounts of the loss of livelihood, exposure to violence and life threatening situations in Myanmar: An older man said: *"I had land in Burma. My wife and family were tortured. It happened frequently. I was beaten; was taken to jail 3 times and got beaten. I refused to give rice and they arrested me three times, from 1 week to 10 days. My son bailed me out. Neighbours were also taken away. Once I was asked to bring daughter and wife. I refused. I was beaten. I have a bullet inside my body. We were afraid and left. We were told we are not citizens... All my property was taken by Burmese. Land for cultivation is cultivated by them. The houses were given to re-settled Burmese."*

My husband was taken as a forced labourer and they broke his back and he died. The Buddhist people supported by the military came and raped all the women. One day soldiers came to my house and took my child relative into a room and raped her for hours. I was forced to watch. When they had finished she was beaten [...] unconscious and completely covered in blood. We were not allowed to leave the house for over a month. I tried to nurse her without any medical help but [...] she died. One family member [...] was so ashamed that he had not protected her that he tried to kill himself. We had to help him too. We were watched the whole time – it took me 2 more months to escape.

For some displacement had begun in 1948 and forced repatriation had been experienced more than once. One younger woman, who bore witness to horrific incidents, could no longer remember what life was like before their flight by wooden boat to Bangladesh after walking for days. Others had no memories of Myanmar as they were babies when they left or were born in the camps. Those who were too young to remember live in the collective memories and stories of their family flight histories. Intergenerational engagement with the community's experience of refugee flight and displacement was clearly evident.

The psychological consequences of the pre-arrival experiences and ongoing threats and lack of safety are apparent. An older man (partially paralysed) stated *"As life is so difficult (he cries) I get upset. We had a lot of*

*property in Burma and had to leave there. I am not used to live in the camp. I cannot sleep. I am depressed. I am very angry and think 'why is my luck so bad?'*

Both women and men described the forced repatriation movements in Bangladesh up until the end of 2004 and the different measures used to send them back are very present in their minds. The important role played by the Mahjees in assisting authorities and police in deciding who to target for repatriation and threatening those who refused was stressed. Refugees have a very real fear of future forced repatriations. They gave details of the forced returns and the pressure they were placed under to sign up for repatriation, their fears if they did not, their efforts to organize and protest and the consequences for those who opposed it. An old man recalls how he was detained for 1½ years, 10 years ago, after participating in an anti-repatriation demonstration in one of the camps. The police shot at him and he has a bullet injury. One man stated: *"Camp authorities came and threatened us to return to Burma. If we refused our house was destroyed and we had to move to a new shelter. This happened 4 years ago."*

A middle-aged man with a large family suffered violent forced labour in Myanmar. There was an attempt to forcibly repatriate him in 1997 and his protests at that time led him to being detained for 18 months. In 2001 there was another attempt to repatriate him and this time he fled the camp for several years while his family remained in the camp. Since returning to the camp he has had more pressure on him to repatriate, and rations have been withheld until he signs an in-principle agreement to return. He feels the camp is unsafe, and wants to go somewhere where he and his family can live in peace. Eventually he wants to return to Myanmar, but only when it is safe to return.

Some refugees described being held in a centre prior to deportation and being subjected to torture and violence, one woman described how her husband was tortured, her baby was thrown to the floor and how she wanted to throw herself into the river when held for 25 days. Men were beaten and jailed. Men and children were made to walk in circles of eight until they fainted. Women were beaten and detained after being falsely accused. Some shared stories of rape. Families were separated and children left behind. People have spent extended periods in jail without trial or conviction as arbitrary arrest and punishment have been used against those who refused to repatriate. The women's groups in both camps described widespread beatings and that some were raped when they opposed repatriation and the departure of MSF in 2004.

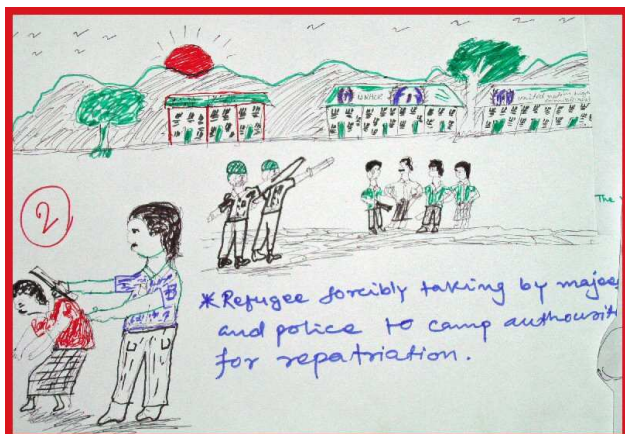


Even today, some of those caught up in the forced repatriation incidents remain in prison and many participants gave accounts of the treatment they or their relatives had been subjected to in prison. Some people still live outside the camps and the Camp-in-Charge (CiC), who is responsible for camp administration, incited refugees and villagers to 'hand-in' those outside the camps. Those handed in were also subjected to beatings. Refugees showed scars on their body after being beaten by villagers, including with an iron bar, when caught outside the camp. The impact on those imprisoned and their families remaining unprotected in the camps has been enormous and many have their family books and food rations removed, depriving them from their main means of survival.

### **Solutions proposed by refugees**

For some refugees, memories of abuse completely defined their attitude toward Myanmar, and repatriation is out of the question regardless of what transpires politically in the future. Others however,

could see some advantage in returning to Myanmar, but only if there were enduring political changes which made a return safe.



Individual interviews did reveal that a few were potentially willing to return. Some older refugees indicated they might see returning to a traditional rural life less daunting than resettling in a new country. Others have extended families still in Myanmar and little familial support in Bangladesh, and didn't rule out repatriation when political conditions improved.

The great majority of refugee women and men were adamant that return was only possible if they were given citizenship, compensated for their lost

land and property or the latter should be restored to them. Some also called for Rohingya representation in the Myanmar government. None of the participants indicated a belief that the situation had changed in Myanmar based on the information they obtained from those crossing back and forth across the border and from family residing in Myanmar. In fact, people reported that many of those forced back have returned to Bangladesh, but they live mainly outside the camps, one example being the settlement of almost 8000 people in the Teknaf makeshift camp. Those outside are sometimes supported by those inside and vice versa. Reasons for recent arrivals from Myanmar include continuing fear of persecution by the authorities in Myanmar and the denial of opportunities to earn a livelihood.

### **Team observations/suggestions**

Prospects for voluntary repatriation appear very limited, particularly among those refugees who are on the cleared list as many of them were subject to forced repatriation attempts in the past.

The impact of the past forced repatriations and of return being the only allowed long-term option on the capacity of the refugees to trust in any undertaking to build a better future for them should not be underestimated. As UNHCR has noted, any activity that requires the signature of forms such as registration, is met with a high level of distrust, a natural response based on the deceptions and suffering experienced in the past.

The compounded trauma present in all of those with whom the team engaged underscored the urgent need for a community based psychosocial programme to support the current efforts of UNHCR and the Government of Bangladesh to address the past experiences and provide protection and solutions to the refugees. A psychosocial programme is a necessary step to support the community in its efforts to develop constructive coping mechanisms and to address their outstanding long term emotional needs building on the intergenerational capacity to articulate a strong identity.

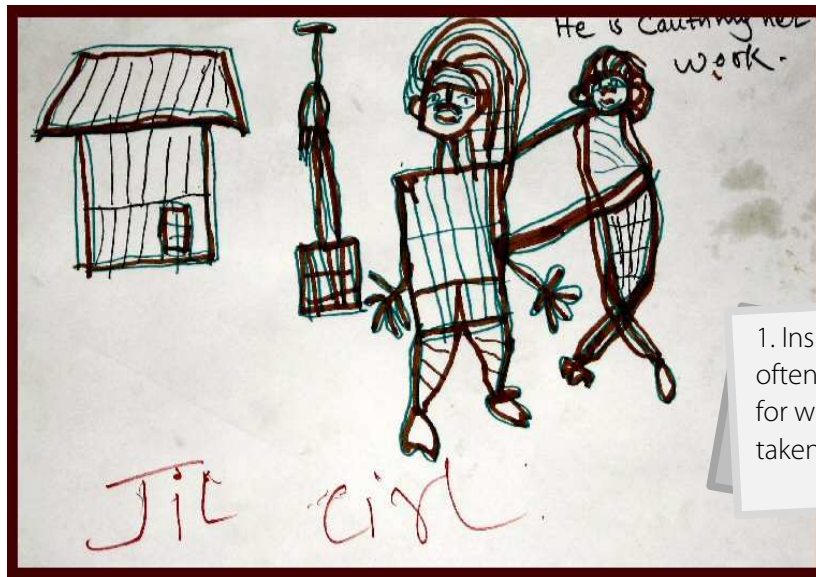
The group consultations and individual interviews seemed to have been the first time that many of the refugees were able to tell their story of persecution and flight from Myanmar. Having "witnesses" to the events which precipitated their flight, being heard and acknowledged particularly in light of the years of threat of repatriation to ongoing persecution (as though the reasons for their fleeing persecution had never been validated), and to understand the level of trauma present in so many individuals and the degree to which the past 15-16 years have exacerbated their trauma, was very important.

Programs and activities which engaged individuals and groups within the camps would offer the potential to build some trust between the refugees and service providers, including UNHCR, and to begin to work *with* them in exploring both immediate and longer term solutions to their situation.

Some potential for voluntary return emerged among more recent arrivals not formally registered as refugees. Voluntary return might be particularly pertinent to those refugees who would cope better with extended family support, such as older persons without family support, single parent families, or persons with disabilities who are unlikely to be able to support themselves either in Bangladesh or a third country.

The consultation process and individual interviews did suggest some capacity for sensitive and respectful engagement with the possibility of voluntary return for some aged refugees. The conversations that took place within the context of the consultations and some individual interviews (despair at life in Bangladesh, yearning for homeland, reliance on Allah etc.) suggests that further gentle exploration of the hopes and expectations of the elderly regarding the future would be useful.

## SAFETY IN BANGLADESH



1. Inside the camp often when women go for water they are then taken and raped.

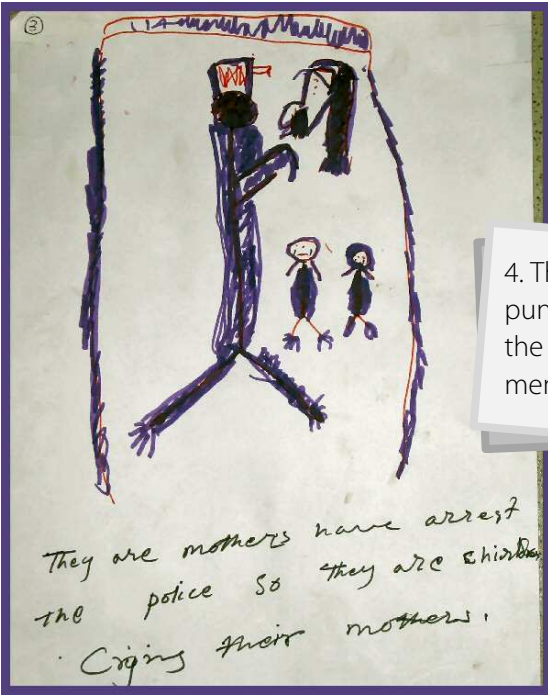


2. A woman went inside the jail and she had her baby there. Her other five children were alone in the camp.



3. Police came and told this lady to have physical relations with the police.





4. The police and mahjees punish the men by beating the wife and other family members.



5. The woman is trying to get to the latrine but the mahjee and the villager they take her. Sometimes they also rape her.



6. This picture shows the safe place this place will be very charming, and there will be beautiful scenery, a house, a beautiful place.

## Safety in Bangladesh

*"Inside the camps we are unsafe, outside the camps we have no food or shelter."*

*"We cannot spend another 16 years like this"*

*"We want to help ourselves"*

### Refugees' perspectives on camp management and administration of justice

The refugee women and men described the system established some ten years ago to support the government agency, Refugee Relief Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) under the Ministry for Relief and Disaster Management, responsible for administering the camps. Individual refugees were designated as leaders, known as "Mahjees", by government officials to support the Camp in Charge (CiC) and the police in maintaining control and order, as well as to support camp organisation. Men and women



explained how over the years the Mahjees have become very powerful in the camps and that together with their volunteers they play an important role in supporting the CiC and the police in exercising their powers. Women described being visited by the wives and volunteers of the Mahjees, and being threatened and/or beaten by them.

The men described their fear of being falsely accused of a crime which they did not commit, leading to arrests, beating and often imprisonment. They describe inhumane detention conditions, including that the jail was built for 300 inmates but houses 3500 and prisoners have to pay bribes to be able to lie down to sleep. Refugees spoke of inadequate sanitation, food and health services whilst in detention as well as of the long waiting periods, up to several years, before being taken before the court. They gave examples of having drugs or weapons planted on them and being arrested and then detained. They explained that this happened to deter them from reporting corruption and serious crimes, including violent ones such as rape, being committed by Mahjees, the CiC and the police. People told of how some of those accused lived outside the camps for fear of arrest, others continued to be in jail, while some had been released.

Women and men described a system of camp control run by the CiC, police and Mahjees which is sustained by and in turn sustains intrigue, false accusations, mistrust, bribery, corruption, fear and violence and the ultimate threat of ending up in prison. *"A few days ago my mother was beaten by the men who are criminals and work with the Mahjees, – they are refugees. My mother was beaten then my brother wrote a letter to UNHCR about the beating and then he was arrested and sent to jail."*

Everything from marriage, divorce, registration, family books, food rations, going to school, leaving the camps to find work, visiting relatives in jail or outside the camp, appears to carry a price whether financial or in kind. Failure to deliver can result in false accusations and imprisonment and/or physical violence. For women the fear is even greater given the threat of sexual violence, both during detention but also in the camp when their husbands or fathers are detained and they remain without male support. Incidents of sexual abuse against boys were also reported. In response to the question *"What is your life in the camp like?"* A woman replied: *"Do you know about hell? This place is not hell. It is worse than hell."*

The violence is not contained to life within the camp and those there, but also involves villagers from the outskirts of the camps and the external authorities such as the police. People described being caught up

in the next tier of the legal system where the possibilities for freedom depend largely on the capacity of relatives to mobilize and obtain money to secure one's release, followed by months or years of reporting on bail.

Women and men of all ages described how young people were beaten if they went to the private schools in the camps to get better education. Women told of children having their knuckles beaten. Young people and women said that those who were educated or potential leaders in the camps were also targeted by the Mahjees and that those who approached UNHCR or visiting delegations were followed and/or punished and some were even imprisoned. *"On Friday and Saturday UNHCR staff are off. We are afraid on those days when there is no one of what may happen. From evening to morning we are so afraid. We are afraid of volunteers, of CiC staff and government people. If you solve this problem then we will be happy."*

People also described violence outside the camp and explained that villagers were involved in beating children and some have been raped when collecting firewood and water. They explained that the villagers enter the camps freely to use the wells, intimidate the refugees and to find young women. Stories were told of young children held for ransom after being caught outside the camp by villages and of young women being kidnapped by villagers from the camp during daylight and brought to the forest, beaten and raped.

The refugees from Kutupalong were fearful of the villager who owned part of the camp and his influence over all that happened in the area, particularly given his alleged involvement in criminal activities.

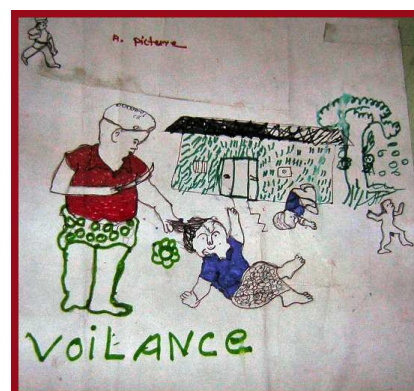
A man has been incarcerated four times, for periods ranging from two months to three and a half years, all on the basis of false allegations. His efforts at legal redress for unfair imprisonment have been to no avail. A case was lodged at Cox's Bazaar but did not proceed. He reported that he always spoke out against the Mahjee's corruption and injustice and that his refusal to be silenced by the Mahjees had caused him to be targeted. He was adamant that he would continue to speak out against injustice whatever the consequence.

### **Refugees' perspectives on women and girls at risk**

*"My life is ruined - it is terrible. That is why we say either bomb us or put us in the ocean if you can not help us. My grandchildren are better dead than with ruined lives."*

Women explained how they are also beaten, arrested and detained, and showed scars and complained of aches and pains from the beatings. Some women reported being raped in prison. Other women had given birth to their babies in prison. Women spoke of having spent from days to years in prison.

Women also described how they were beaten if they tried to help their husbands in jail or if their close relatives were leaders or educated. They explained that they were then targeted by the Mahjees and in some cases men were put in prison to enable the Mahjee to pursue their 'beautiful young daughters'. *Young girls are in danger especially if they are beautiful. Police in plain clothes come to the sheds at night with villagers. If the girl has a father or a brother they say that if the girl will not have sex with them they will take the father and brother and beat them and falsely accuse them and then they will have to pay a large bribe or go to jail.* One described going to jail for 15 days over a stolen cooking pot. Women explained that they can be raped when going to the latrine. They explained that young women were abducted by villagers, raped and later abandoned



although some pointed out that there were good and bad villagers. The women described these abductions and "marriages" as "torture".

Women heads of households described their fears for their children, especially young women, and explained that as they had no men at home they are at particular risk of harassment and intimidation.

An older woman expressed her hopelessness with regard to the current situation: "My 14 year old granddaughter is very beautiful so I keep her locked in the shed most of the time. I am terrified that she will be abducted and/or raped if she goes out and villagers or the police see her. I am also terrified that my daughter in law will be raped while my son is in jail and I try to keep her in the shed". Another woman described the fate of a young girl who had been raped: "Now that this has happened, every villager knows this and no one wants to marry her. What will happen in her future? When she came back from the forest after the rape she didn't get medical treatment".

Women reported that at night villagers, police and guards in plain clothes would go to the sheds to target young beautiful women. They said the men would rape the girls and threaten their fathers and brothers with beatings and false allegations if the rapes were reported. Some women said influential villagers forced girls to have sex on the false promise that their male relatives would be released. One older woman reported that some girls were having unsafe abortions and some had died.



Women reported that young girls were being married early as a means to securing protection for them: "I gave my first daughter in marriage – we had to pay a dowry of 20 000 taka. My mother helped by selling her jewellery but there is no more money. I don't know what will happen to the other daughters. She was only 15, but very beautiful. All the men in the camp and the villagers were 'scrambling for her'. She would have been raped or abducted. We had to marry her for her own safety."

The men described how helpless they felt as they were unable to protect the women and some highlighted how it was more dangerous for those living on the outskirts of the camp. This situation was seen as an assault on their role as protectors and depletes their identity. Encumbered by often vivid recollections of extreme hardship in Myanmar, years of camp life have inexorably depleted many men of their identities as fathers, husbands, sons and leaders. Yet they fight back and men described how they sleep in shifts and so one man was always awake keeping watch at the door. Girls aged 12 and above as well as women with husbands in jail are more likely to be targeted and wives and daughters are particularly exposed during these periods to corruption, abuse and violence. Some reported that men were falsely accused so that Mahjees could deliberately target their wives and daughters. Young women who become pregnant as a result of rape will have a marriage arranged by the Imam and as the women explained, there is no alternative but to become the second or third wife. Other women said that when women are raped, their husbands do not want them as wives anymore.

### **Solutions proposed by refugees**

*"I'd like to change the camp, get rid of the Mahjees".*

The refugee women and men identified violence and lack of safety in their daily lives as their most immediate concern. They repeatedly and forcibly made the point during consultations that the existing camp management and administration processes which were intended to ensure safety and security are not only ineffective but at the core of the problem.

Their first concern was to change the Mahjee system to have fair representation. They repeatedly said, there are elections everywhere else, why are there no elections for our leaders. The people asked for an effective committee system to reduce the violence and work with law enforcement agencies. They also called for a neutral police force.

Another major concern expressed was for family members in prison often under false accusations. Solutions for those who are in jail included access to justice, UNHCR legal assistance and support to visit relatives in jail and to establish a register of all of those in jail.

The refugees also called for effective security in the camp including 24 hour UNHCR access and greater UNHCR presence in the camp. Everyone called for no further forced repatriations and stressed the need for identity documents and the right to be able to work. In addition, women called for their rights as women and as refugees to be respected. Both men and women lamented the lack of access to effective justice and called for perpetrators to be prosecuted.

All groups requested practical measures such as sufficient lighting and that firewood be provided to reduce the risks of violence from collecting firewood outside the camp.

### **Team observations/suggestions**

UNHCR's efforts are focused on bringing about changes to the administration system and it is seeking close coordination with the Government of Bangladesh, including the Refugee Relief Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC). Changes are gradually being introduced to eliminate corruption, false accusations and to reduce the power of the Mahjees. Nonetheless, it will take considerable time for these changes to be perceived by the refugees as permanent given their experiences in the past and to be able to trust in the capacity of the authorities and UNHCR to provide protection.

As these efforts come to fruition and given the pervasiveness of the violence and corruption which has involved the CiC, the police, villagers and particular refugees, a complete overhaul of the camp administration and justice systems is urgently required. The refugees gave a clear account of how the Mahjee system, sustained by the CiC and the police, enables control over the camp and impunity for any action by those in cohort with them, while at the same time they can implicate any innocent person in a crime and send them to jail. The evidence of resistance/resilience to the impact of the Mahjees offers hope for change, but also highlights potential for conflict and suggests the urgent need for conflict resolution skills and training and peace building programmes to sustain changing camp administration systems.

Making changes to the leadership system is an important step in breaking the cycle of corruption and violence, but as the community has learnt to survive in such an environment over the years, it is important to factor in the role of the community in sustaining it. For example incidents such as fights at the water point or the use of the neighbour's cooking pots are not resolved amongst neighbours, but taken to the CiC, who in turn may file charges.

Unless new patterns and forms of leadership are introduced there are signs that the old patterns will resurrect themselves. Some forms of community control exist already and were noticeable when some women were challenged in the consultations when they opted for a more independent position from the larger group. There is a danger that new leaders will follow the Mahjee role model and fall into a pattern of exercising power through violence, corruption and fear.

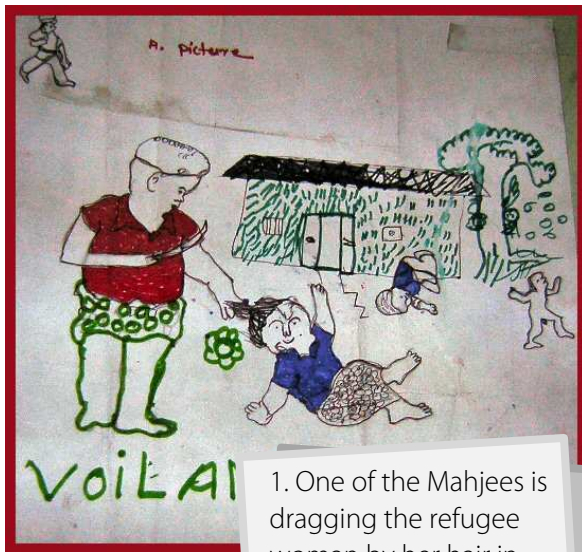
Therefore, any changes will only be sustained if accompanied through working in partnership with all the different community members to build a common understanding of what a good camp administration and justice system could be in their context. The camp rules and the representational system need to be built with the community as well as the CiC and be aligned to the local village system to minimize differences and the space for misunderstanding and abuse. To facilitate the functioning of the camp the community approach should model itself along the lines of the Bangladeshi village system and to ensure smooth access to local administrative systems.

Support is required in terms of conflict resolution skills to gradually gain the trust of the community and provide the members with tools to manage their own lives and regain control of their immediate environment. Therefore, it would be beneficial if a new partner with solid experience in developing community based systems could be supported to work with a local partner to support the process and ensure that future elected leaders are provided with the right skills and that the community has an opportunity to directly participate in determining how the camp will function and to support these changes through supportive, non-violent relationships. With time, the same NGO should be able to gain the confidence of the community to look more closely at issues of domestic violence and sexual and gender based violence within the community itself. Although some women made passing reference to it in the consultations, and it came up in the individual assessments, further exploration of the issue is required to consolidate on the awareness raising work done to date.

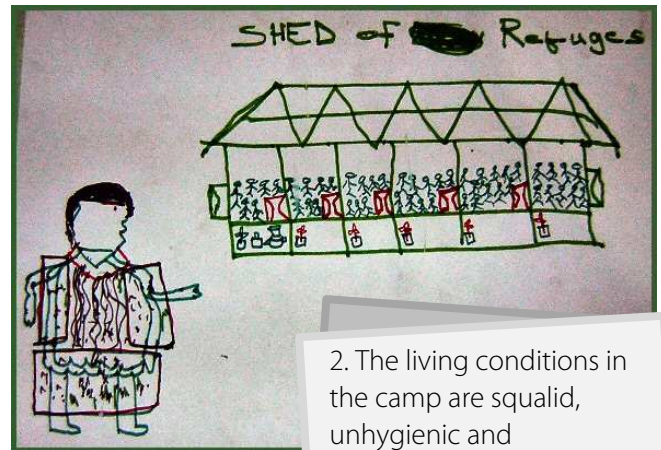
Recognition of the importance of people's faith and the role of the Imams is an important strategy to engage with people and understand how it informs refugees understanding of present realities and possibilities for the future. Group work could be utilized to effectively engage people with the particular and complex issues associated with their refugee status. This approach builds upon strong cultural orientations towards communally-based responses and encourages a more sustainable dynamic of peer support and solidarity.

Consideration should be given to an appropriately skilled local NGO undertaking a range of therapeutic community based group interventions. The camp refugee population should be included in the development and design of any psychosocial programmes. However, any psychosocial programme will be of limited benefit, unless the immediate safety and security issues in the camp identified by the refugees as being of overwhelming concern are first addressed. It is also important that any such program is set within a plan to resolve the refugees' future status.

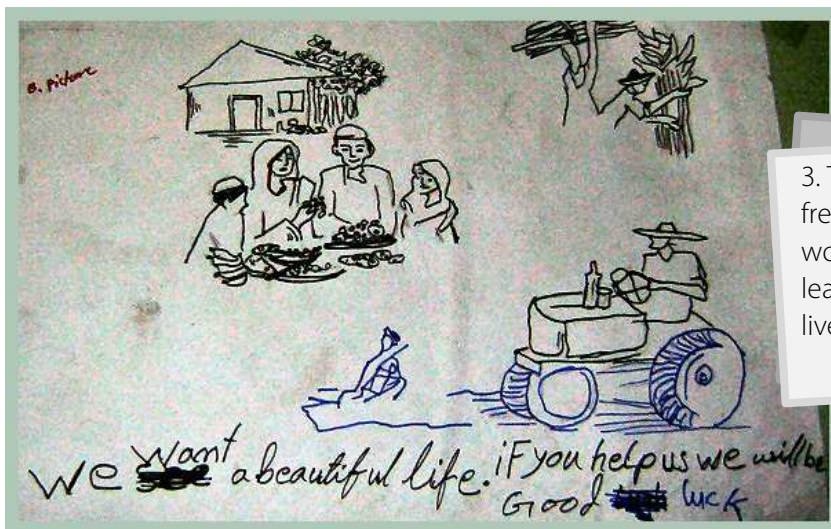
## FAMILY LIFE



1. One of the Mahjees is dragging the refugee woman by her hair in order to force her to repatriate to Burma.



2. The living conditions in the camp are squalid, unhygienic and overcrowded. This affects normal family life.



3. This shows the desire for freedom of movement, for work, the opportunity to learn and use skills and for livelihood.



4. This shows a happy and supportive family. This is the sort of family life that the refugee community want to be able to enjoy.

## Family Life

*"What I want for my family is a safe place where we can build a house and grow a garden to make it beautiful."*

### Issues presented by refugees

The impact of camp conditions and the consequences of flight from Myanmar on family life are profound.



The refugees described a long history of disrupted family connections and multiple losses as a result of flight and their situation in Bangladesh. The expression of grief was prominent in relation to family members from whom they had been separated for years or who had been killed. This grief is compounded by the further losses they described as a consequence of violence. Some described their unresolved grief in relation to not knowing the whereabouts of loved ones who had disappeared.

In addition the refugees cited the ongoing threats of violence in the camp and their immediate fear for the safety of family members. Children need to know that their parents are able to protect them. If children and young people cannot have confidence that the adults are able to protect them, their world becomes an unsafe place.

Refugees gave examples of how forced separation further erodes family life. When fathers and mothers are imprisoned for long periods, relationships with children are seriously affected. The many instances of fathers being forced by circumstances to live outside the camp for safety, seriously impact on the family. Inadequate food and shelter places enormous stress on parents which in turn impacts on children and wives who are exposed to domestic violence. As a result the integrity of the family is undermined. The family unit is no longer able to transmit traditional values. Practicing cultural tradition including traditional marriage ceremonies and theatre performances contravenes camp rules. Parents described their sense of powerlessness of being unable to protect their children, while mothers frequently talked of their daily struggle to provide their children with sufficient food.

Mothers talked about husbands being imprisoned and absent from their families for long periods of time. This separation means that children grow up without fathers and wives are without the support of husbands. The cost to family life is significant.

The physical conditions in the camp are also a great stress on families, where many family members are living in a small confined space. As described by one parent: *"We are not angry with you but we are hurting from our situation. The shelter is not enough where we are living, the house is so small and the door so low. Being together as a whole family, water is not sufficient that is why our brains hurt. We have not had education and that is why we cannot explain ourselves. We apologise for any mistakes."*

Refugees spoke of unregistered family members in the camp who struggled to survive without rations and were totally reliant on family and neighbours. The social and psychological costs to both parents and children when they are denied registration as refugees, and therefore are without access to food and shelter, being forced to beg for these basic rights is profound. For a mother or father to have to listen to



their child's cries of hunger or to see them without clothes other than one dirty t-shirt is unbearable distress. For older children in particular who are living in this situation, the sense of injustice is palpable.

Parents are forced to sell rations in order to buy medicine for their children. Inherent in making this sort of decision is to sacrifice what is available for one child to be able to give to another. Parents sell rations to be able to pay for sons to go to school. Or to bribe a man who is threatening a daughter so that she will be left alone.

Women described spending whole days inside their sheds as they have nowhere to go and older women spend the entire time sitting in the shed. For older people prayer is often the only routine of the day and men go every day, while the women explained that they only attend on Fridays.

A number of older men, in particular, commented on the young people drifting away from the authority of their parents and elders, from the influence of religion and into an aimless and anti-social lifestyle.

### **Solutions proposed by refugees**

Refugees highlighted the need to strengthen the family unit in order to provide a protective environment for all family members. Registration of *all* those living in the camps so that they have access to basic food rations and shelter is seen as a fundamental first step to reduce risks - particularly of young mothers - of being forced into sex or trafficking as well as to be able to provide basic food for her child/children. Another important step is to release fathers – and mothers – who are in arbitrary detention, or at least to facilitate wives/mothers and children being able to visit those in prison as a first step so that relationships are maintained.

### **Team observations/suggestions**

The multiple stressors identified in all the above impact significantly on family life. Children are exposed to ongoing high levels of violence and because parents are traumatized they are often unable to provide consistent care and protection. Children are vulnerable to exploitation as a result. It is commonly accepted that the effect of violence on children is mediated by the capacity of parents to protect them from such violence and to provide stability and security. Finding ways within the camp situation to strengthen the parents' capacity to provide such protection is an important first step towards reducing the impact on children of living in situations of chronic violence.

The undermining of the role of parents is often the consequence of forced communal living, such as in refugee camps. Parents in Nayapara and Kutupalong have been ground down by the years of hardship, having to survive from one day to the next and facing the daily humiliation of not being able to adequately provide for the family. This is probably most keenly felt by husbands and fathers, whose role as provider is totally undermined. Young adults who have grown up in this situation are facing the reality of a much curtailed life and are beginning to express anger and frustration.

The entire fabric of the community is in danger of being torn apart as people struggle to survive and protect themselves. A community mobilization strategy would go some way to supporting refugee women and men to rebuild more representative structures which promote respect and rights for all. The involvement of an NGO using a community development approach as suggested in the previous chapter would be advisable to create the capacity to implement the strategy. Such an initiative would also help to strengthen and redefine the role of men within the current context.

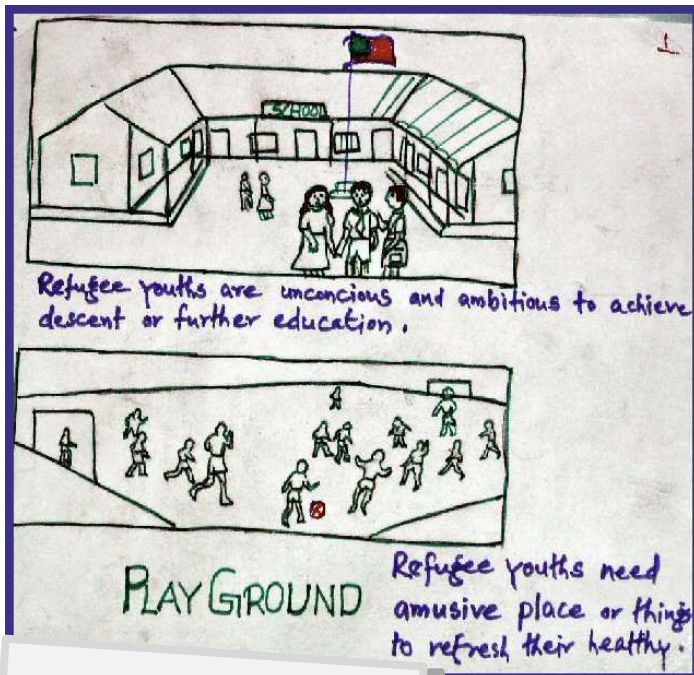
It is important also to acknowledge the many informal networks and community and social links that are a window into self-initiated support systems. There are many examples of neighbours and friends supporting one another through the sharing of rations, providing protection and shelter and helping to

earn income. These forms of community support are an important foundation to base further initiatives aimed at strengthening their capacity and self-reliance. However, to really understand these support systems a longer timeframe is required to enable close and sensitive engagement with the refugees.

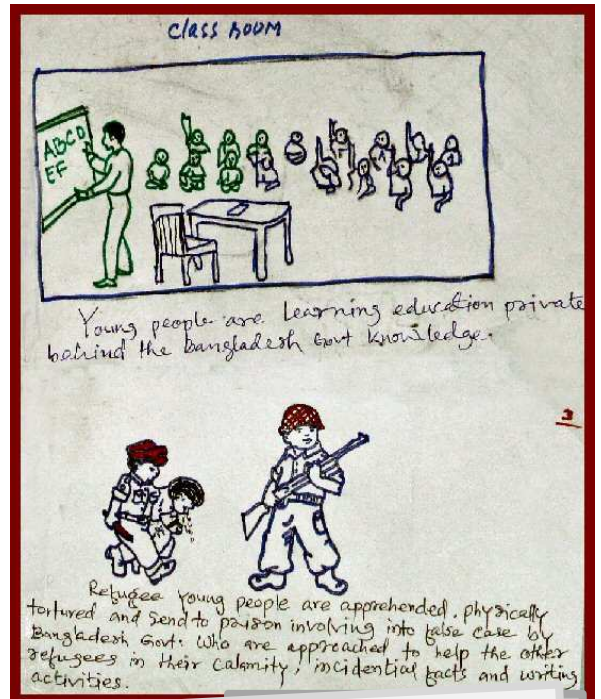
Over time there appears to have been a reversal of authority with young people assuming the role of spokesperson. Their voices were forcefully represented during consultations while older people's voices were correspondingly underrepresented. This is an indication that in the camp, the exercise of older people's authority and traditional roles is being further undermined. This could lead to a weakening of traditional protection mechanisms and cultural ways of practicing social roles, such as older persons being involved in mediating conflict and their opinions being respected. Finding ways to engage the young people in dialogue with their elders, to develop the capacity of older men and women to influence, may be one important immediate strategy.

Opportunities for children to be involved in group programs which can focus on expression of what has been happening in their lives, how to manage the present and to begin to build some sense of future could be helpful to counteract the destruction of years in the camp. Better educational options will provide structure as well as the opportunity to learn.

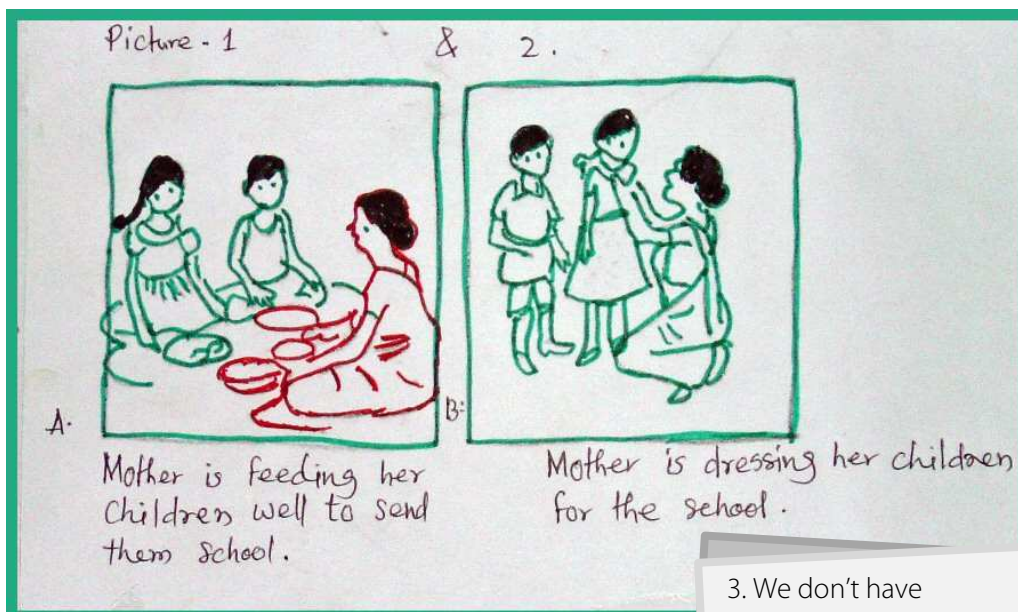
## YOUNG PEOPLE, EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE



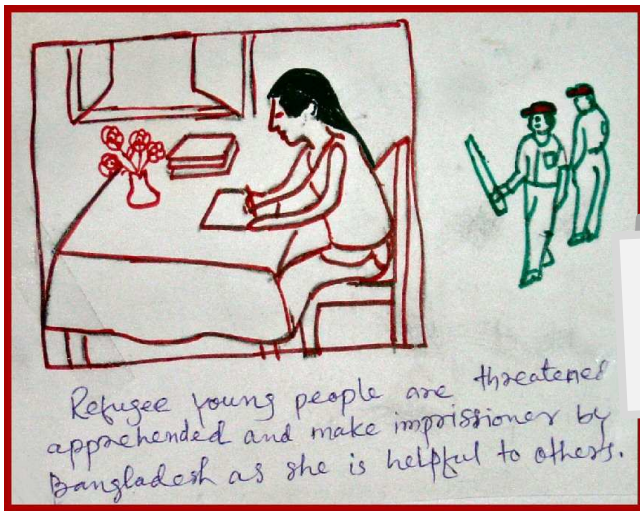
1. We want to make our children better through education. We want high school and university. Children need to keep their minds active and to be healthy.



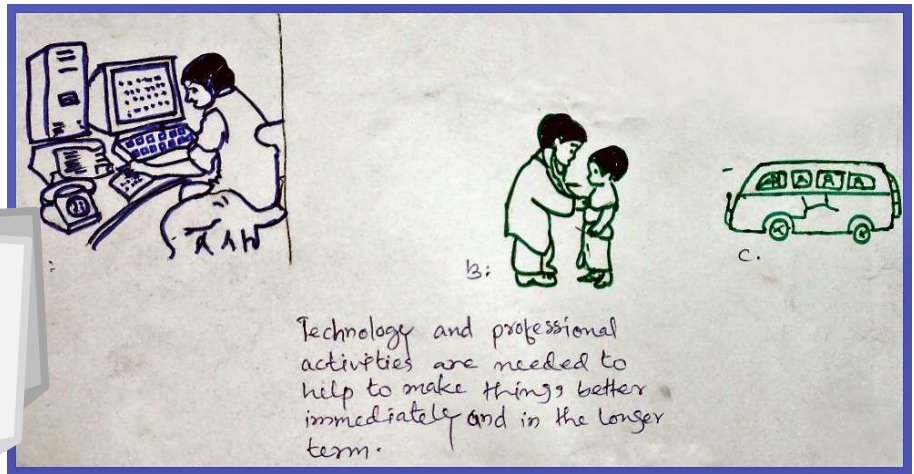
2. We try to have private schools, but teachers live in fear of having false allegations being made against them.



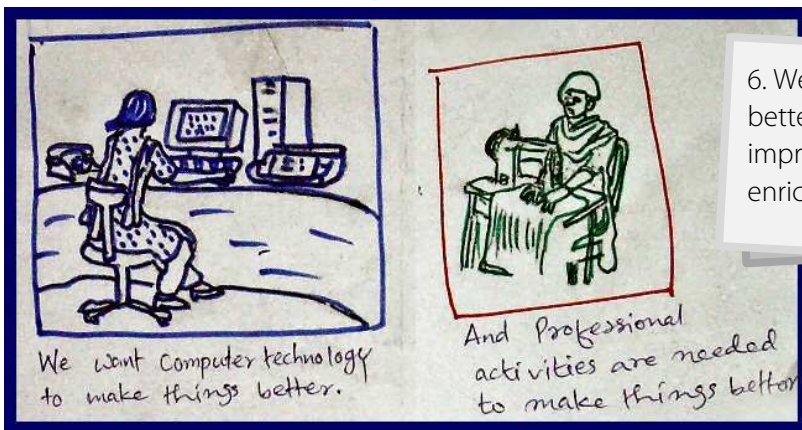
3. We don't have enough food for the children and we cannot send them to school in clean clothes.



4. When young people try and learn they are targeted by authorities.

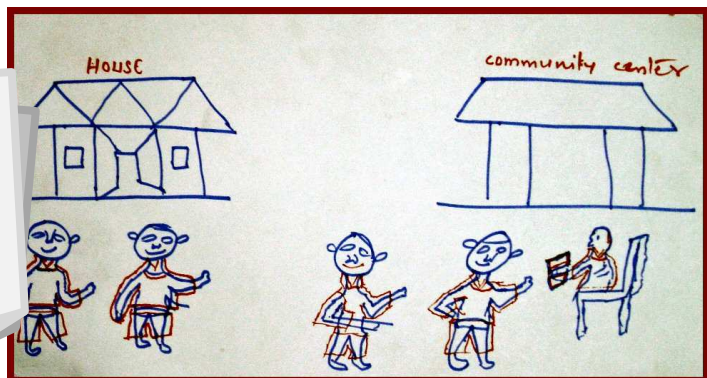


5. We need training which will be useful for our future and will let us help others in the camp, for instance, medical skills.



6. We want to be better educated to improve ourselves and enrich the community.

7. We ask UNHCR and other implementing partners to provide us with better educational facilities, materials and opportunities. We want to achieve more, but need materials, schools and the ability to go on to university.



## Young People, Education and the Future

*"Education is the backbone of the community and food for the young people"*

### Issues presented by refugees

The young women and men raised their concerns that the current situation in the camp left them with no prospects for a future and they described a life without structure and dominated by violence. There are few, if any, opportunities for safe play. Refugees spoke of daily violence affecting the lives of children and young people, including family violence, witnessing violence, exposure to beatings and rape, or threats of both. Refugees recounted children being beaten when collecting firewood. Both women and men explained that children lacked suitable playing areas and were beaten when caught playing outside the camp.



The refugees spoke of young people, mainly boys and men, being arbitrarily imprisoned. Many young people remain imprisoned for years. Refugees told of stories of adolescent boys aged 15, 16 and 17, who are in prison and have been in prison for 12 months or more.

The lack of access to education was a concern for everyone. The refugees explained that the education system stopped at grade 5 and that education after that is not allowed. They described how the Mahjees and authorities closed down any private schools, stating that they needed the mosques, where lessons were held. *"I have 6 daughters and 2 sons. Here they cannot go to school. If I die what will my children do?"*

The refugees explained that the curriculum was limited to Mathematics, Burmese and English. People highlighted how the living circumstances did not allow children to study as they were hungry when they went to school, overcrowded in their homes and there was no lighting to study at night. The poorest refugees complained they could not afford the private schools. The women also described the actions they take to support their children to obtain good schooling, such as trading food rations, selling fuel supplies, etc. because education is so important to them.

Corruption is alleged to affect the delivery of educational services. It was stated during consultations that only the school visited by delegations regularly teaches all three subjects, that books are not properly distributed, that Mahjee children are favoured for teaching positions, that educated and politically active young people aren't permitted to teach, and that there are irregularities in 'the incentive payments' of food to teachers. Refugees also indicated their lack of trust in the organisation managing education.

A young man is living with his widowed mother and older male siblings. He was 9 years of age on arrival in Bangladesh. He completed year 8 schooling in the camp and commenced studying at a school in the local community obtaining very good results. A Mahjee caught him leaving the camp for school and demanded 5000 taka. The Mahjee was offered 200 taka but refused. The young person was caught on another occasion and 3000 taka was demanded. Fear of the Mahjees and ongoing extortion has caused the young person to cease his studies.

Participants in the consultation process described how efforts to organize a youth committee had been frustrated and that a women's committee had also not been allowed. There was a group of adolescent and young adult men in the consultations who demonstrated considerable knowledge about human rights, and who had organised a youth committee. This committee worked on issues such as access to education, domestic violence, the dowry system and polygamy. They performed a play on International Women' Day which expounded their views on these issues. In the consultations they displayed an energetic concern for the plight of their people. However, their committee was not authorised by the camp authorities in its original form and reduced to a volunteer group.

### **Solutions proposed by refugees**

Women and men, older and younger, saw education as the main hope for their future. They explained their wish to study beyond class five, as well to expand the number of subjects and increase the resources in the camps. Other solutions included private tutoring to be allowed in the camps and for those with education to have an opportunity to further their skills through technical and vocational training. The older women told of their hopes for the future of their children and both women and men described how they would like to have an education in order to become teachers and doctors. The refugees wished to be able to participate in medical activities in the camps. A few said they had basic medical first aid training but were not permitted to assist in the delivery of medical services.

The refugees called for separate education for girls and boys and the freedom to pursue cultural activities in peace. Parents also wished to see adequate spaces for their children to play.

### **Team observations/suggestions**

The situation of the young people without structure in their lives and no sense of justice contributes to the overwhelming sense of disillusionment. This reality can contribute to anti-social behaviour. The lack of educational opportunities or recreation contributes to frustration and anger, particularly for adolescents.

In the short term, it is important to support youth and children by expanding the educational opportunities available. A longer term strategy of mainstreaming refugee education into the local education system in coordination with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF should be pursued with any funding to benefit both refugee and local children. Likewise, the aspirations of younger refugee women and men to obtain professions could be explored with the national universities.

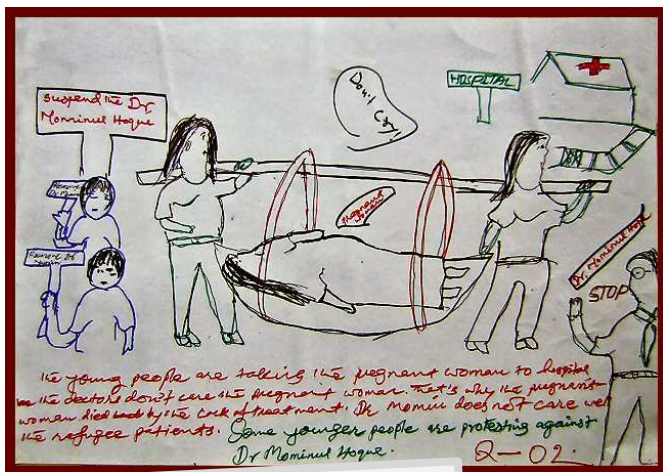


The introduction of technical training for younger people including IT skills may offer them perspectives for the future and support them in their ambitions to lead a different and productive life.

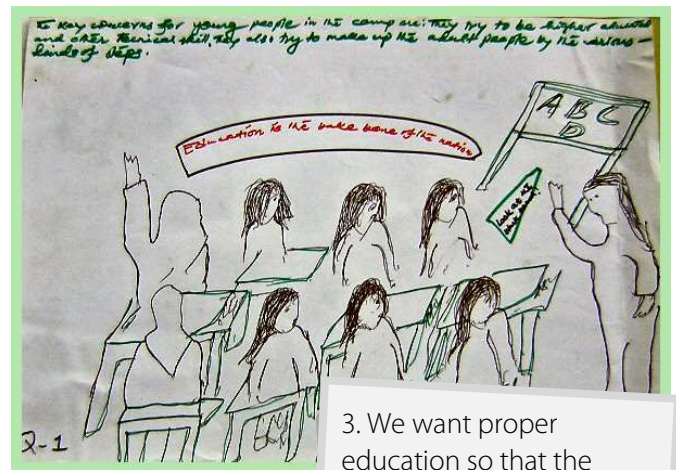
# HEALTH



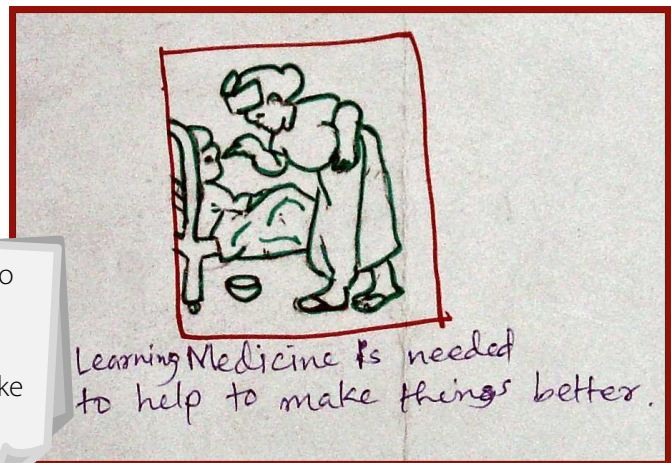
1. Two young people are helping one sick person. This doctor is not doing anything, he refuses them.



2. One pregnant woman is carried by two young people to get medical help. The doctor doesn't take care of the person and she dies. We would like this type of doctor to be removed from the camp.



3. We want proper education so that the young people can learn and then these things will not happen.



4. We can learn to be medical assistants and work to help make things better.

## Health

*"If someone in the family got seriously ill, I don't know what we would do, we'd depend on God"* (Middle aged man who lives with his wife and five children, none of whom are registered).

*"Whenever we are sick, whatever we get is paracetamol"*

### Issues presented by refugees

In the consultations some of the health problems were highlighted, but the individual assessment interviews repeatedly stressed the challenges women and men and their families were facing in obtaining solutions to their health problems. They spoke of substandard living conditions and inadequate food that cause disease and ill health: *"(We) wish to highlight our living conditions. It is really crowded and we cannot move. There is smoke in the sheds. We get a lot of diseases and children get sick. Water supply is totally insufficient. We get it only in the morning and only two buckets and tomorrow it will be the same again."*

Significant health concerns, both physical and mental, were reported. TB is prevalent as are stomach complaints, skin diseases, respiratory problems, high fever and poor nutrition which contribute to increased sickness and slower development. Refugees spoke of poor eyesight and dental problems as well as physical health problems relating to torture and rape. Some people had partial paralysis, which makes daily life very difficult. Incidences of disability, such as paraplegia, paralysis, deformities and partial or total blindness, make living conditions very difficult for families.

The refugees spoke of doctors who do not provide adequate treatment as people felt their concerns were easily dismissed and they were not listened to and several persons reported abuse, corruption, and disrespectful attitudes by the doctor. Others highlighted that there is no outreach work by doctors to visit people in their homes, particularly the disabled and older persons unable to travel. Many refugees felt they were not getting the right treatment and described the frequent use of paracetamol to deal with many ailments. Prescribed medicines were largely unavailable in the camp; moreover, refugees had to find the money to purchase them which meant selling rations, etc. They explained that at times they were referred to the hospital and yet they had no money to travel to Cox's Bazaar or Chittagong.

A young man with severe physical disability is unregistered and has no access to medical treatment or rehabilitation beyond occasional analgesics. He was referred to the hospital but there were no funds to pay for treatment. He continues to live in severe pain. Due to his disability he can't move without assistance and spends most of the day lying or sitting in a shed. His adolescent sister is his full time carer. Without other family members in the camp, the two of them are completely reliant on her attempts to collect food from other refugees.

Parents described their frustration and helplessness at not being able to resolve the health problems of their children. This was particularly important for those with children suffering from serious longer-term illnesses and disabilities who required additional interventions.

A woman 34 years old lives with her husband their 6 children, aged between 15 and 1, and her brother. Her four year old daughter has a severe developmental delay. She has not yet walked, speaks only a few words, and is distinctively physically underdeveloped for her age. The mother has sought to have her daughter assessed at Chittagong Hospital, following a referral by Cox's Bazaar Hospital. She is seeking specialist assessment of the child's needs and capabilities. However, she has been unable to proceed with referral as it has been blocked. The daughter is cared for on a daily basis by her 10 year old sister. The mother is also concerned for the mental well-being of her husband who she describes as socially isolated, anxious and depressed.



The refugees have a history of shared traumatic experiences. The ongoing lack of security and safety in which refugees are living, compounds this past trauma and intensifies responses to re-traumatizing events/experiences. The psychological health of children in the camps is of particular concern to refugees. Furthermore, there are particular psychosomatic symptoms present such as tension related aches and pains, headaches, stomach problems, etc. Symptoms of high levels of anxiety, being on constant alert for danger, poor sleep, depression, loss of appetite and suicidal tendencies were reported.

A mother of four children looks after her 10 year old son who is chronically sick and unable to walk because of severe pain in his joints including knees, elbows, hip and back. She has to carry him everywhere, including to the toilet at night and to the health centre for treatment. She suffers pain in her shoulders and back and constantly worries about him when she is away from him such as when collecting rations, water, attending bail conditions etc.

No effective treatment has been provided for her son through the camp health centre so she sells rations to procure treatment and medications outside the camp. She has no male support in camp and shoulders the responsibility for her children, her elderly and sick mother, her siblings and nieces and nephews. She describes symptoms such as headaches, shoulder pains, dizziness when standing, poor sleep, loss of appetite, many fears and worries and "always thinking."

### **Solutions proposed by refugees**

The refugees very much welcomed the return of MSF for referrals and emphasized the need for female doctors, a better transport system for emergencies and doctors on standby. Men highlighted the importance of health services for women. The refugees also expressed their interest in participating in the delivery of health services.

During the individual interviews a number of the refugees described getting treatment from other refugees who provided traditional medicines.

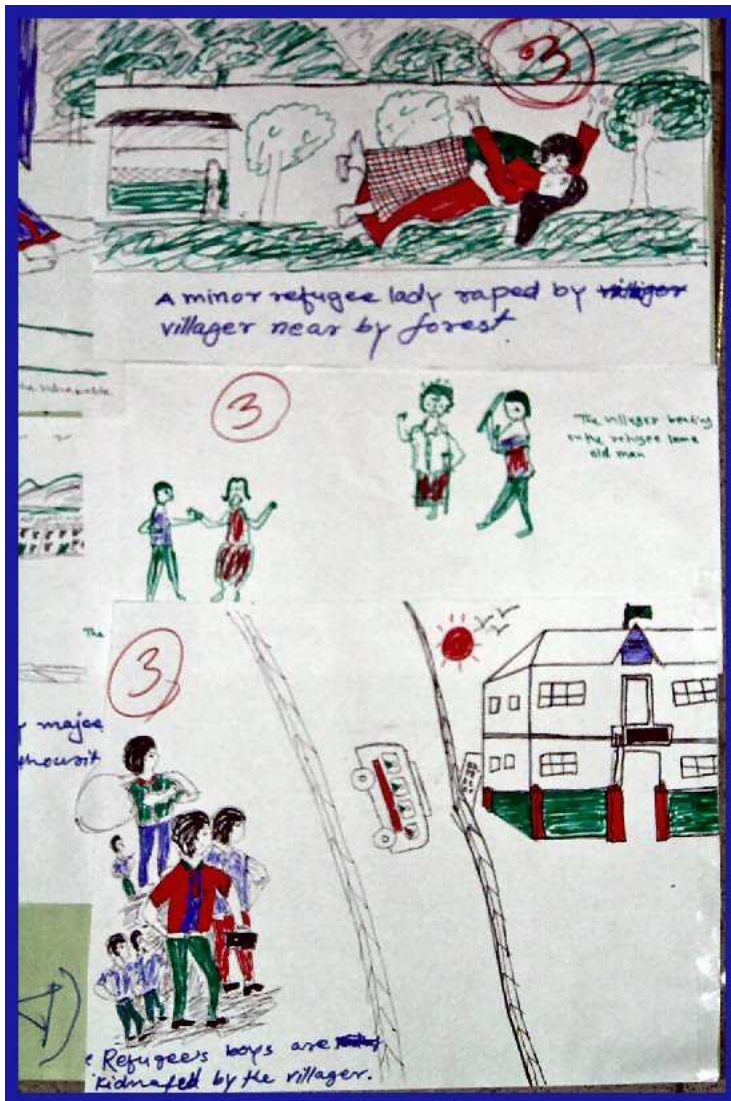


### **Team observations/solutions**

The compounded physical and mental health symptoms contribute to the population being at heightened risk. The return of MSF will go a long way to address some of the more common health problems and code of conduct sessions will help in counteracting problematic attitudes and behaviour by medical staff.

There are no services in the camp to provide care for those with disabilities, especially for the diagnosis and early intervention for young children to prevent more serious problems. Engagement with local NGOs focussed on particular health needs of groups within the refugee population would help to increase access to much needed care.

The assessments conducted with some 80 persons confirmed the high level of individual trauma that was evident during the consultations. The absence of psychosocial follow up currently leaves camp staff with no capacity to support individuals in a meaningful manner, particularly as they are overwhelmed by the level of needs in the camp. "Clowns without Borders" recently conducted performances for children in the camps and observed that they had never before seen such an intense and aggressive reaction by children to their work.



Services to address the psychosocial needs in the camps are urgently required. It is important to acknowledge the weight of the past trauma carried by the population and understand how it interacts with the present coping capacities of the community and its impact on behaviour in the camp. The prevalence of severe mental illness in the camps is unknown but it is likely to be very disabling for the sufferer, a burden on those who support the sufferer, and to be entirely untreated.

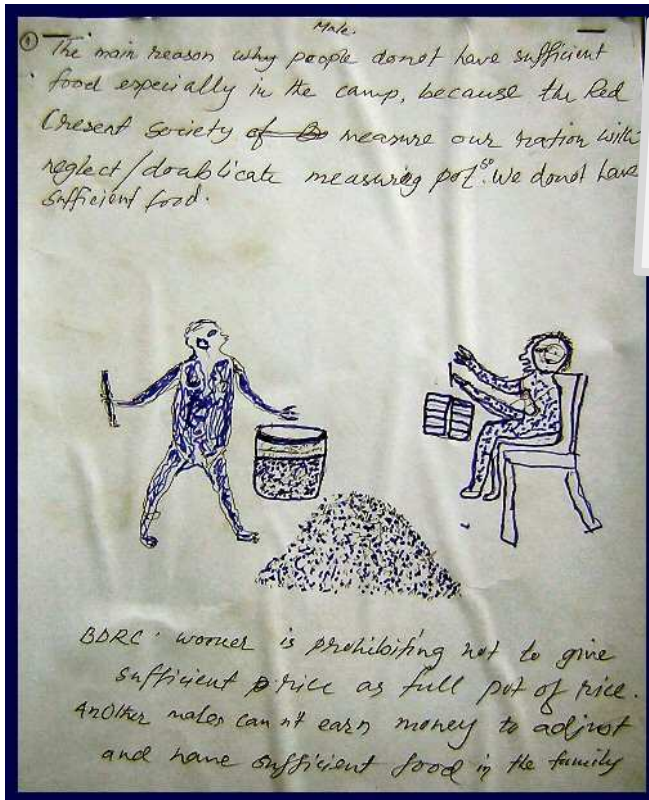
UNHCR's efforts to secure the release of all persons in jail are an important step to reduce the daily anxiety and protection risks people face. Consideration should be given to expand the successful intervention by UNHCR to release detained women with small children to all the remaining detained women.

In addition to improving health care and providing psychosocial support, written and verbal information campaigns for the population on the medical services available, such as for TB, entitlements for hospital treatment and transport services, the role of MSF and the situation with regard to medicines may help to strengthen the use of services.

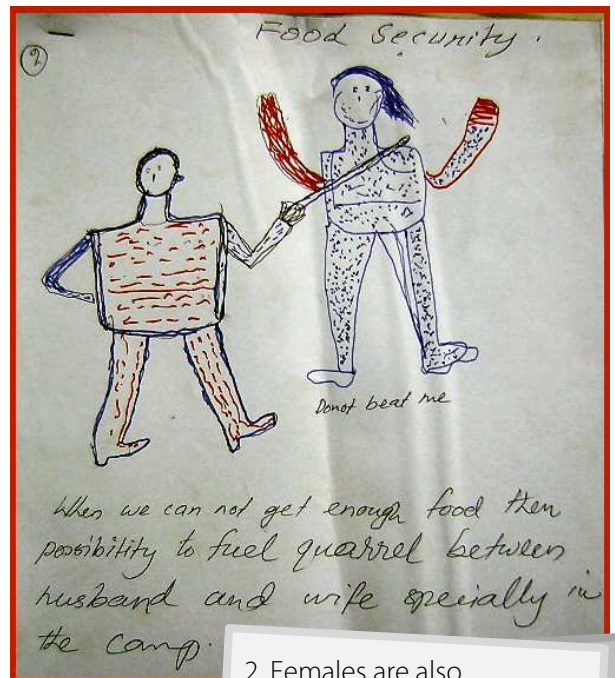
One possible strategy to improve the health situation of the refugees is to explore ways in which traditional healing could be utilised in the health centre. Herbal remedies and other forms of traditional treatment might be more acceptable to the infirm and would also be a way of engaging refugees in contributing to the improved health of their community, as has been identified in the refugee camps on the Thai/Myanmar border.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bodeker G et al (2005) 'Traditional Medicine Use and Healthworker Training in a Refugee Setting at the Thai-Burma Border' *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol. 18, No 1 Oxford University Press. Hiegel, J.P. (1994) 'Use of Indigenous Concepts and Healers in the Care of Refugees: Some Experiences from the Thai Border Camps', AJ Marsella, T Bornemann, S Ekblad & J Orley (eds), *Amidst Peril and Pain: The Mental Health and Well-Being of the World's Refugees*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 293-309.

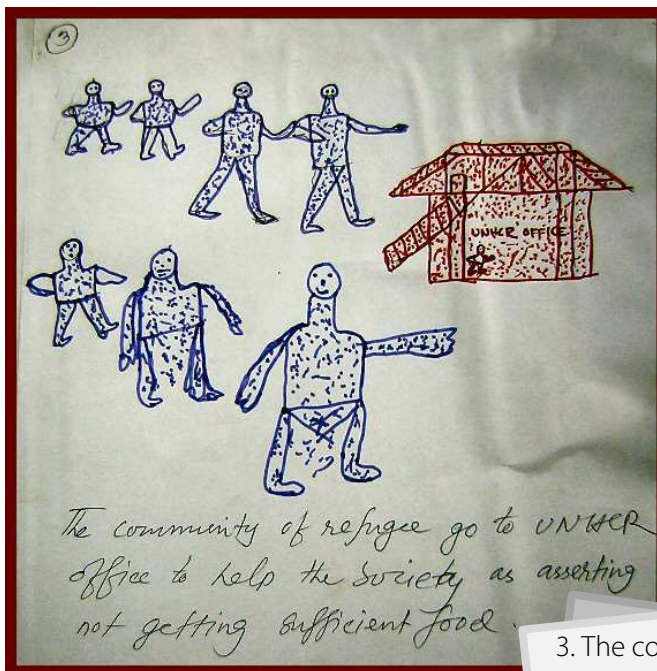
## FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS



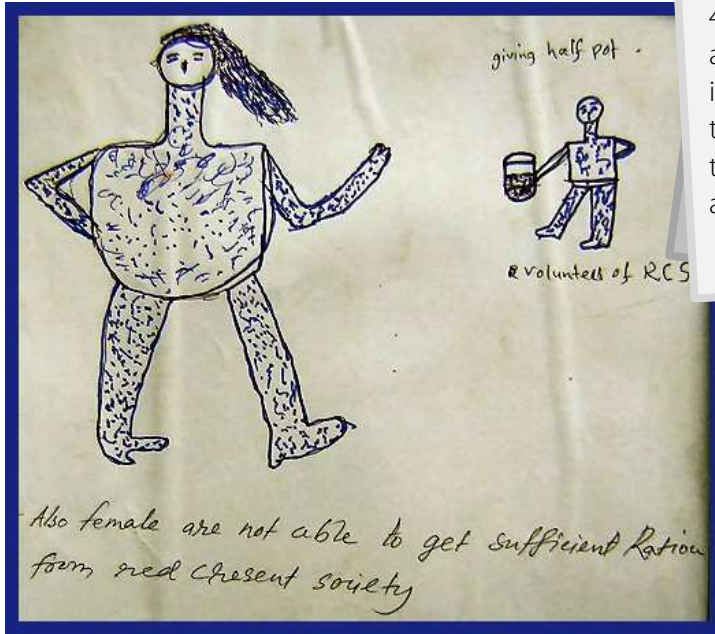
1. We are getting not only torture in the camp but also not enough food. There is corruption and we do not get full rations.



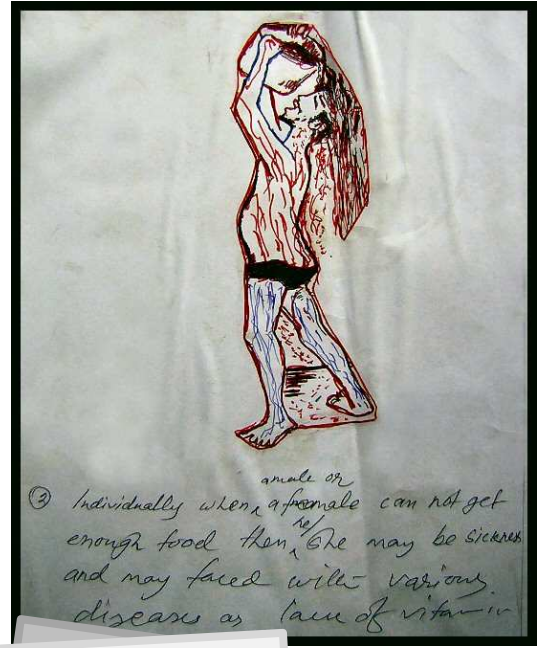
2. Females are also discriminated against in that sense. Lack of good food is impacting on health and relationship within families.



3. The community as a whole is weak and can not support one another.



4. Rations are not given in full, and also type of food is inappropriate. Refugees have to seek work, or beg, outside to obtain fresh food and are also being beaten for that.



5. Women who do not get enough food have special problems.



6. Those working outside are punished by the mahjees and their ration books are taken.

## Food security and livelihoods

*"All I want is a big fish to eat"*

*"If I could eat an egg I would feel better"*

### Issues presented by refugees

Refugees repeatedly described how the already insufficient food rations were reduced further due to corruption at distribution time when smaller measures than those officially designated, were used to distribute the rations. During official delegations and checks, refugees explained that the smaller measuring pots were substituted with the correct ones. They also described being forced to sell their rations cheaply to the villagers. Again the difficult situation of those who had refused to repatriate or had returned after imprisonment was recounted as the removal of rations was repeatedly meted out as a punishment by the Mahjees and the CiC. A number of people explained how after release from prison they were asked to sign up for repatriation in return for having their name added to the family book and thus receiving rations. The very difficult situation of unregistered refugees living in the camp without any access to food rations or non-food items was highlighted in the interviews. Refugees in this situation are extremely vulnerable to exploitation in order to survive. The impact on children is of particular concern.



Family book

People described how the rations are linked to the family book system and women explained that if the man in a polygamous marriage receives the ration, the distribution will not necessarily be a fair one. In a camp setting where the rations are almost the only item to trade and hence, have almost become a currency, the family book has also become a serious commodity. The more family books you have and/or the more people registered on the family book the more access you have to food rations, non-food items and any other assistance that might be distributed in the camp. The family book serves as the means to identity, issue rations and non food items, register births and deaths, record medical information, etc., but as people explained the family book is also often the only thing to pawn and obtain money in order to feed the children or obtain medicine.



BASIC FOOD RATION	
Two weeks/Per persons.	
1. Rice	6.300 KG
2. Pulse	.560
3. V. oil	.280
4. Sugar	.140
5. Salt	.140
6. B. Food	.30

Food rations per fortnight.

Refugee women and men requested variety in their food rations after 15 years of eating rice and pulses. They told of how their children cried and wives and husbands fought over the lack of food and how they sold rations in order to purchase other basic items such as fish and vegetables, including onions and garlic, whenever possible. Inadequate food ration was unanimously cited as a major problem. They reported that the food provided lacked variety and was tasteless. They also explained that rations are sold to purchase medication, kerosene and clothing, pay bribes, and be able to visit relatives in jail.

People also explained how those who did take the risk to leave the camp to work were forced to pay bribes to the Mahjees, the police and villagers in order to be able to move in and out of the camps. As a consequence, the already low wages they were receiving outside were further depleted.

A young mother, who has suffered multiple losses, came into the camp with her young son only 2 years ago and they are therefore unregistered. She had arrived in Bangladesh 15 years ago with her mother and sister. Her father was killed in Myanmar; her mother and sister both died from illnesses in Bangladesh. She has been alone from age of 13 and living outside the camps since she was 9. At 14, she married a man aged 25 who protected her. When their son was one month old, her husband went fishing and never returned. The mother and child lived with husband's relatives but it was a very abusive situation.

She entered the camp for protection and was given shelter by a couple. Fundamental rights for food, clothing and shelter for herself and child are denied because of their unregistered status and she has to beg for food and clothing. She feels great distress that she cannot adequately feed or clothe her son and finds it unbearable when her son cries at night because of hunger pangs. She also faces constant threats of sexual exploitation, violence and harassment. While resisting pressure, she is extremely vulnerable given her unregistered status, no food rations, total dependency on others and tremendous sense of responsibility for her son. She suffers significant psychological distress because of their situation – protecting her son is all that keeps her alive.

### **Solutions proposed by refugees**

*"If we have shelter, the right to work, the right to education and move freely, then all will be easier"*

During the consultations, the desire to be able to work and provide for themselves rather than depend on rations was frequently highlighted. At a more immediate level, the refugee women and men requested full rations in a packaged form in order to ensure correct weight of rations are distributed. They also requested spices, garlic and greater variety in the food. Some refugees had been in camps where markets and market gardens were inside the camp, and said this was more secure than the present arrangement where refugees go to markets in the community and often suffer harassment.

There was a desire for skills training and the means to begin producing things to sell to others, embroidery, fishing nets and clothes. People wished to have the freedom to move outside the camp to be able to produce and sell as well as earn money.

### **Team observations/solutions**

The people and their families who are unregistered or without food rations are at the highest risk of malnutrition, are vulnerable to intimidation and exploitation and being forced to beg or engage in sex. Registration of all refugees in the camp is therefore essential. The introduction of the new ration card system to substitute the family book for food distribution will be of huge benefit and help to eliminate many of the problems highlighted by the refugees.

The right to work would also contribute to better mental health outcomes, as it would increase self efficacy and male family members would also be better able to fulfil their role as providers for the family and remain with their families rather than leaving in search of other alternatives. The introduction of vegetable patches is an important first small step and the production of garlic and spices should be encouraged to respond to the wish to enhance the taste of the food as well as vegetables to improve the diet. Selling ration portions to obtain these items will also become unnecessary.

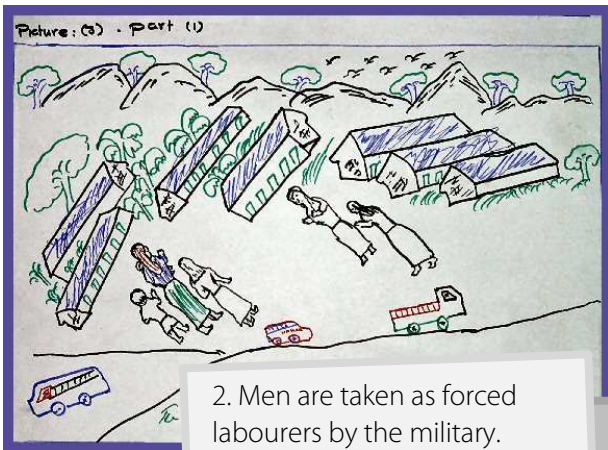
In the long term the solutions must focus on preparing the community members for integration into society wherever they might be. There is broad scope for the development of technical capacity building projects that could bring benefits to both the refugees and the local villagers. Bringing the two groups together in the development of skills and to share small-scale project opportunities around economic activities of mutual interest will gradually enable a shift away from the focus on exploitative relations. The establishment of cooperatives that enable refugees to earn income could be supported with access to small amounts of credit through micro-credit schemes. With the support of the Bangladeshi Government, joint technical capacity building projects around commercial activities such as fishing can be further developed in a way to enhance skills and opportunities of both refugees and local communities.

More external actors in the camps, particularly development agencies such as FAO, ILO and UNDP, are required to support that actions target both local as well as refugee populations.

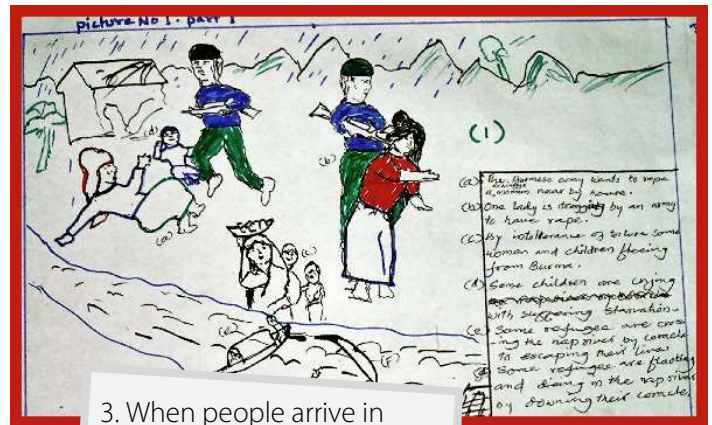
## PERSPECTIVES ON RESETTLEMENT



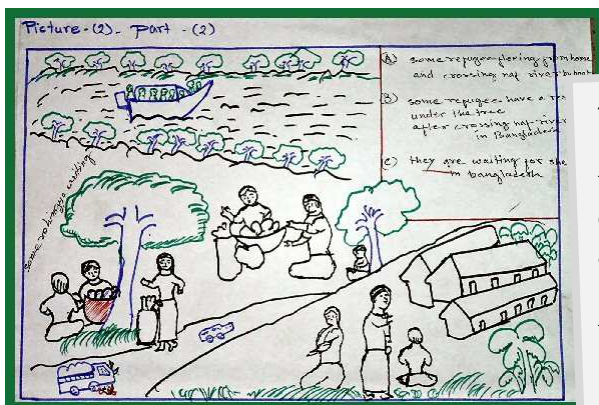
1. We can not return to Burma because of the torture, forced labour, rape and persecution. In Myanmar women are being raped by the military and being forced to flee with their starving children. Refugees drown in the Naf River.



2. Men are taken as forced labourers by the military. There is repression of religious rights, our land is also taken and educated people are either killed or forced to leave the country.



3. When people arrive in Bangladesh they are living on the roadside and riverbank. Many homeless people are dying as they do not get shelter or anything.



4. In the camps the mahjees use violence to force people to repatriate. During operations at night security and mahjees come to the houses and torture and threaten us.





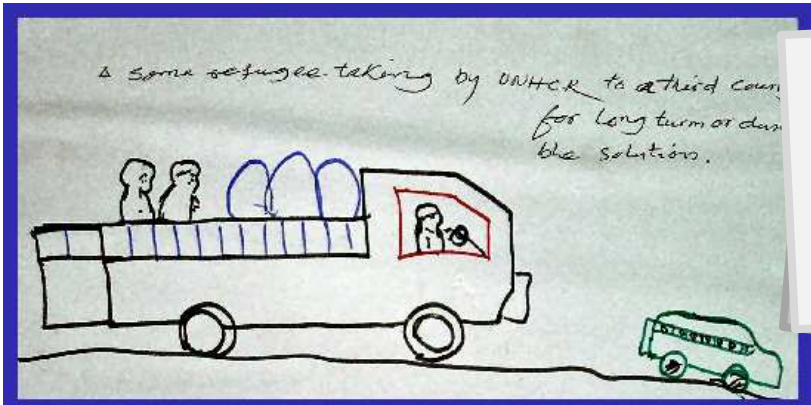
Some community women are going to UNHCR office to know about UN's 1951 convention and 1967 protocol & want to achieve refugees.

5. All Rohingyas want to be able to approach UNHCR to obtain refugee status and achieve durable solutions.

6. We want UNHCR sitting together with the government of Bangladesh to bring about security for those in the camp. This includes providing resettlement for the refugee to a third country.



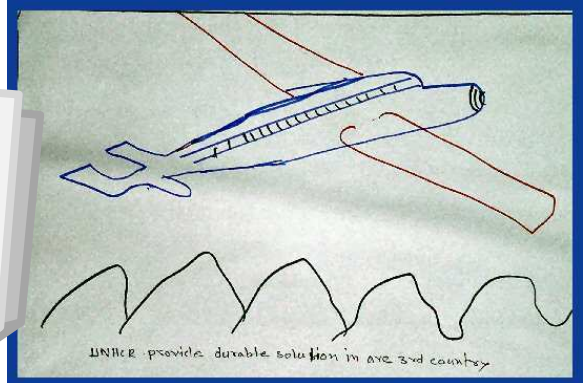
\* UNHCR convinced with Ambassadors for long long term solution or resettlement of refugees in a third country.



A some refugees taking by UNHCR to a third country for long term or durable solutions.

7. Because we will not go back to Myanmar until we get democracy and citizenship we hope that we will get resettlement in a third country.

8. We do not have citizenship in Bangladesh. We want UNHCR to provide a durable solution in a third country.



UNHCR provide durable solution in a 3rd country

## **Perspectives on resettlement**

*"We want peace"*

*"We want to be transferred anywhere where we can work freely and eat freely, anywhere, a jungle or hilly area, where we can live in peace".*

### **Issues presented by refugees**

After years of being 'forgotten' by the world, and the resettlement of a handful of individuals to Canada last year, there is suddenly hope for many. To be taken away from the grinding poverty and lack of safety of camp life, and to have the possibility of citizenship somewhere, were urgent requests. This was particularly so during the group consultations. Faced with the reality of ongoing limited human rights, no citizenship in Myanmar, continued fears of forced repatriation, extremely limited educational opportunities, and daily exposure to violence resettlement in a third country was seen by many to be the *only* solution to their current situation.

During the consultations some of the women stated *"We have stayed here in Bangladesh for 16 years and we don't want to stay here for another 16 years. What will happen for the children? How will they live here?"* They also stated that they don't have any hope that they will go to Myanmar and stay there safely. Within this hopeless frame of mind, resettlement in a third country appears to them as the only way out.

An older woman, after recounting the continued harassment around repatriation stated: *"We want to be released from torture and have peace in our life. If it is possible to get resettled to a third country, this is the long term solution."*

One of the men when presenting the storyboard in the joint session with men and women made the following statement in relation to why repatriation is not possible and what the possible solutions could be: *"[...] we say that there can be an agreement between UNHCR and another state to resettle us by plane. Because we will not be able to go to Burma until we get democracy and citizenship, we will hope that we will get resettlement in a third country. As a short term solution there can be some discussion with the Government and other agencies to provide education and other things. Our last hope is to be able to move freely and get resettlement in a third country."*

### **Solutions proposed by refugees**

Many people spoke about their desire for resettlement. *"To have a secure place to live in peace. It's up to Allah where that is."* The desire was clearly expressed in terms of an overwhelming need to find peace, basic rights and the opportunities to create something for their families and in particular their children.

Both refugee women and men equate resettlement with the only possibility to escape from the insecurity and fear they are facing as well as to be able to work and move freely. Their past experiences of violence, restrictions on their movement and learning and their incapacity to protect themselves and their children make resettlement a unique opportunity.

### **Team observations/solutions**

The overall context as well as the recent opportunity for resettlement afforded to a few have made this the only solution in the minds of many. Nonetheless, the individual assessments highlighted that in fact resettlement would not necessarily be an appropriate solution for many for a variety of reasons, in particular the family situation. However, there were also a number of individuals whose situation, at least

based on the initial assessment, require resettlement as an urgent solution to their situation of heightened risk in the camp and these were referred to the local office for follow up.

While resettlement was the only option considered for many participants in the consultations, those interviewed were more equivocal about this as a solution. After many years of oppression and privations both in Myanmar and in the camps in Bangladesh, individuals and families would find the adjustments to life in a resettlement country daunting. Having had limited, if any schooling, children would face enormous hurdles settling into a more formal education system. Many young people and young adults have spent a whole lifetime in a refugee camp with no opportunity to be exposed to normal social living and have no experience of dealing with social systems. Elderly have only known a lifetime of persecution in Myanmar and privations in camp. Many of them, too, would have great difficulty negotiating a more complex social system.

This said, while there would be challenges, for some, resettlement is really the only option. For example, there are women (often with young children) who are at great risk remaining in the camps without any protection of family. There are men, who have been seriously traumatised in Myanmar through beatings, imprisonment, forced labour, being powerless to protect wives and children, and had to face similar situations during life in the camps in Bangladesh.

Resettlement will remain an important protection tool for this population and may be used strategically for the comprehensive solutions strategy to be developed by the stakeholders' conference.

If resettlement is considered as an option in the comprehensive solutions strategy, it would be wise to manage resettlement in a way that refugees can celebrate shared cultural traditions, share a common language, and create the potential for building a viable community in the country of resettlement. From experience all these factors are important considerations in resettlement – for those who are arriving as well as for the host society in responding to needs.

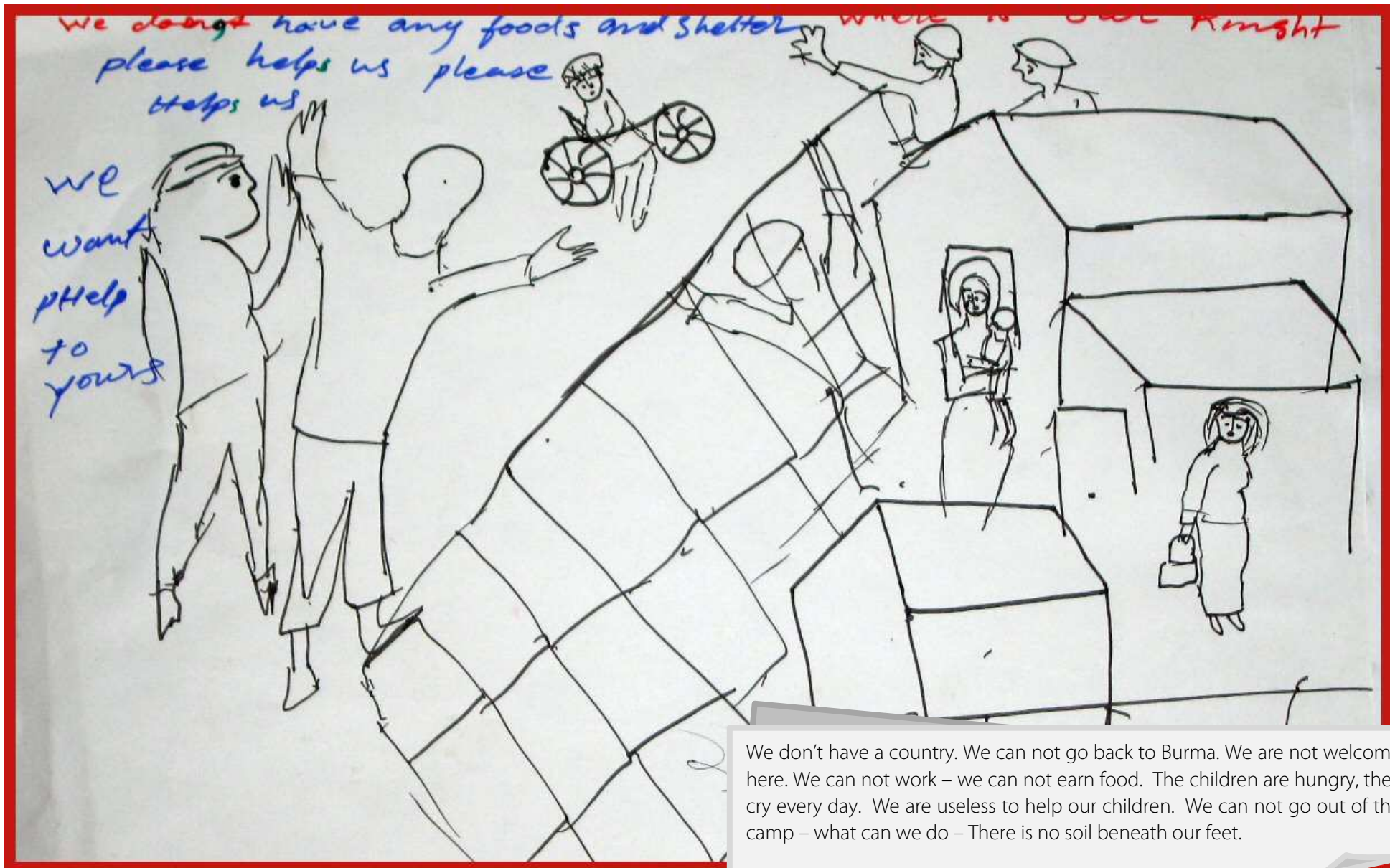
## **CONCLUSIONS**

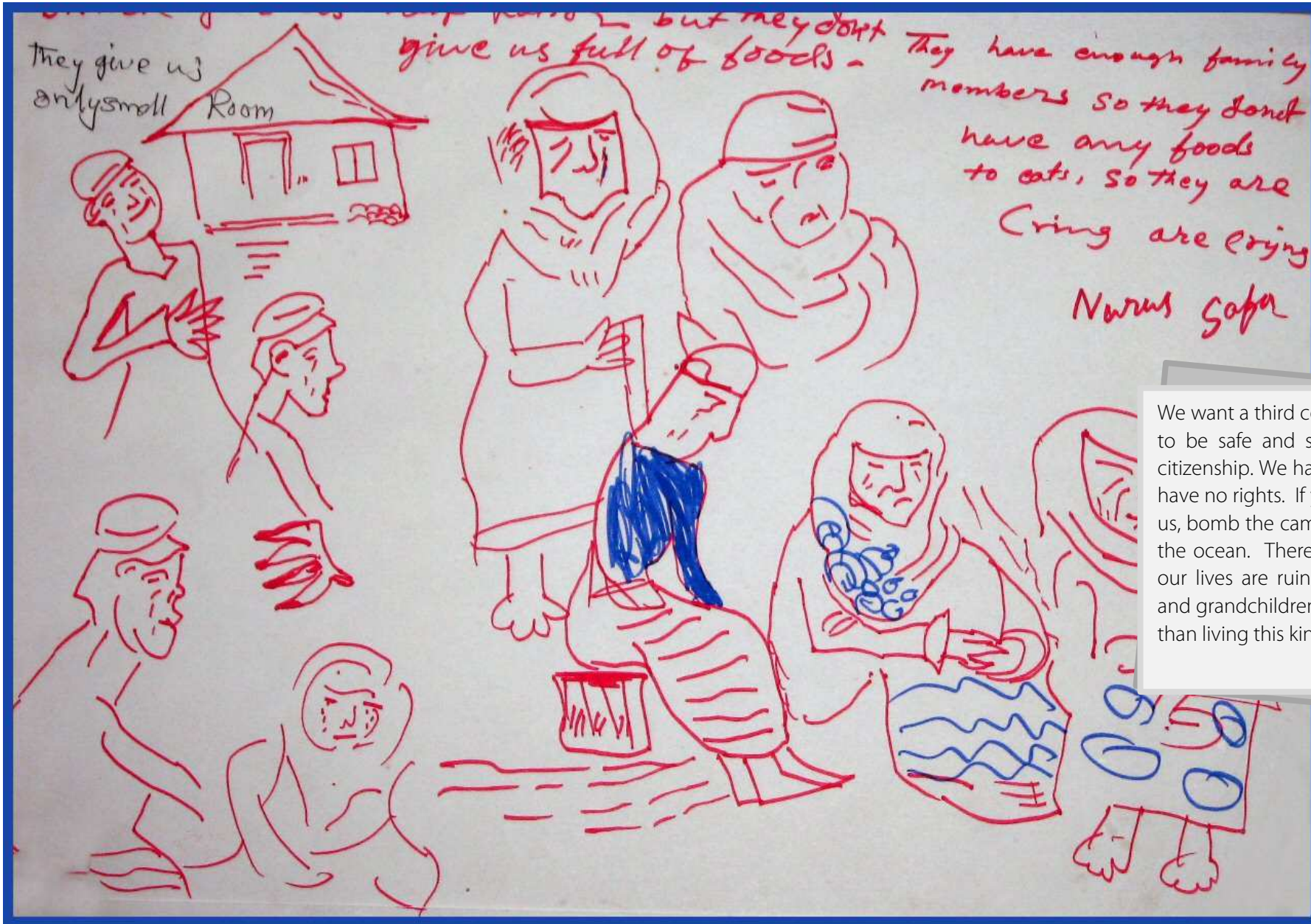
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The consultations have identified or re-confirmed a number of protection risks faced by refugee men, women, boys and girls and have given indications on who within the refugee community is at heightened risk. As part of this process several suggestions for short-term and long-term actions to address these risks have emerged from the community which should guide immediate response and shape a more comprehensive response to their situation.

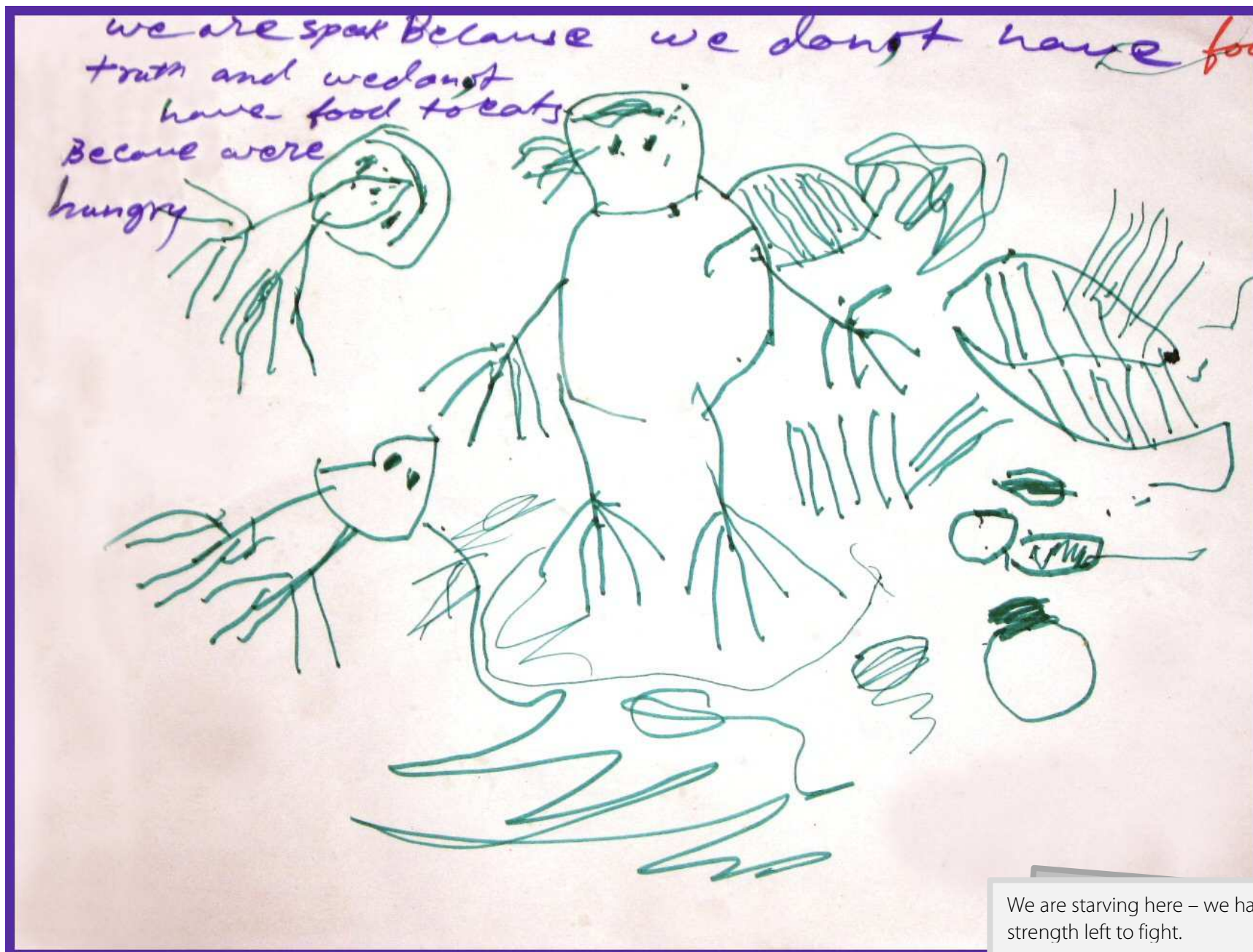
The findings of the consultations can assist the different stakeholders in their discussions on a comprehensive strategy to find solutions for the refugees from Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar currently staying in the two camps in Bangladesh. Breaking the cycle of corruption and violence, granting refugees freedom of movement, the right to work, and access to mainstream health and education facilities, providing relief from trauma and building up the capacity of the community to prevent and resolve disputes in a peaceful manner expanding, where possible, models available in local villages, are some building blocks identified by the consultations for such a strategy.

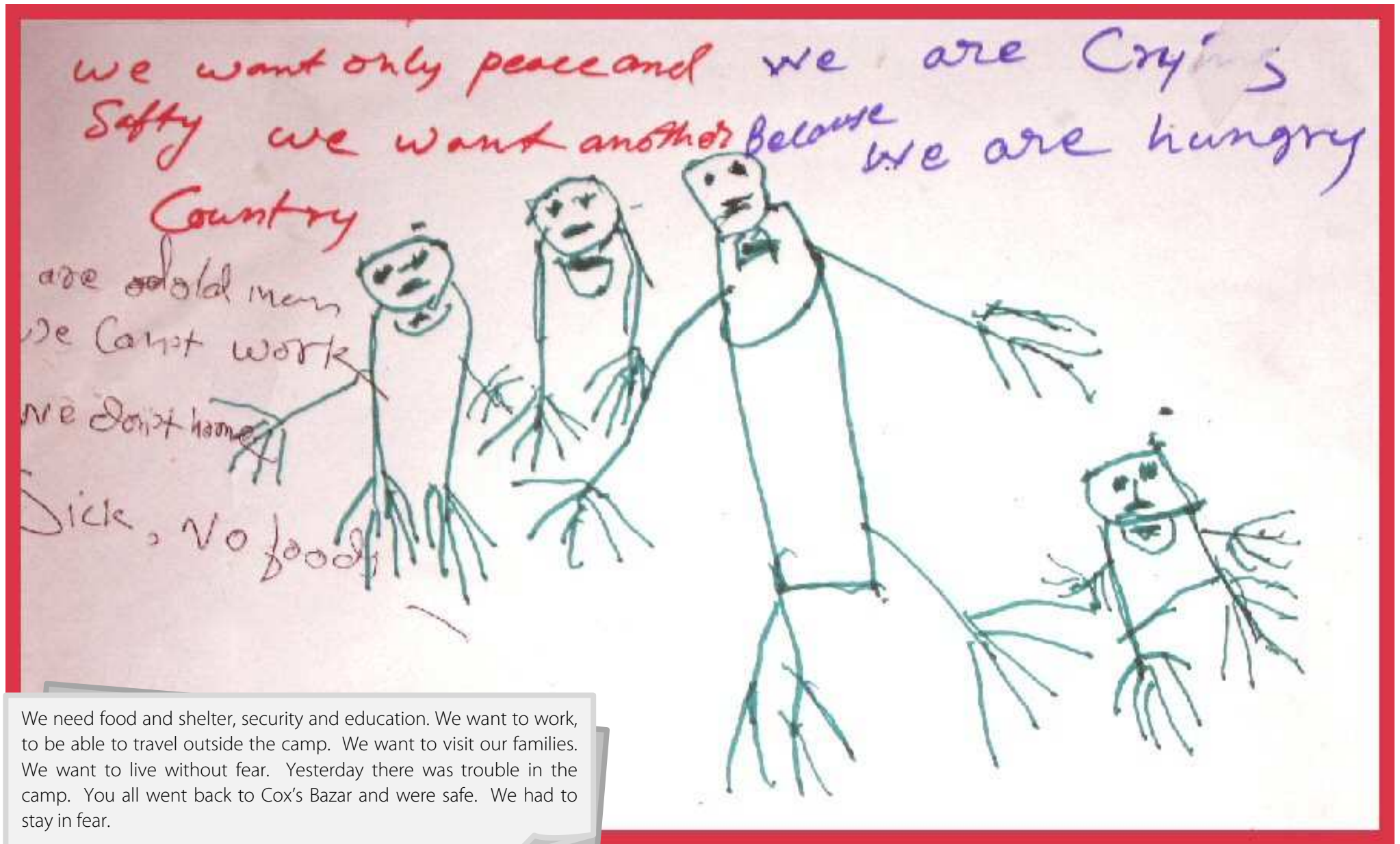
## APPENDIX 1. STATELESS AND REFUGEE





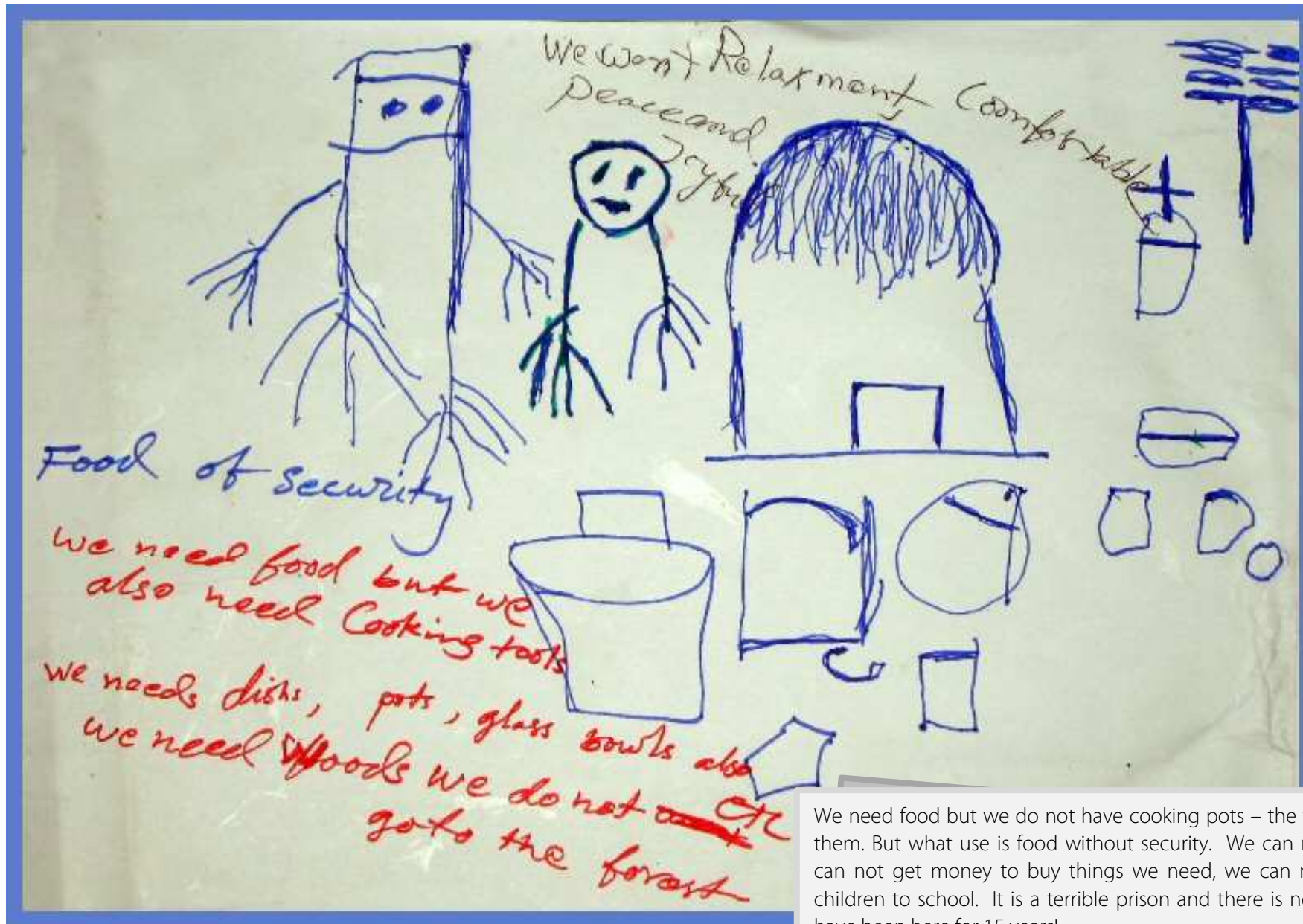
We want a third country. We want to be safe and secure. We want citizenship. We have nothing – we have no rights. If you can not help us, bomb the camp or throw us in the ocean. There is no life for us, our lives are ruined. Our children and grandchildren are better dead than living this kind of life.



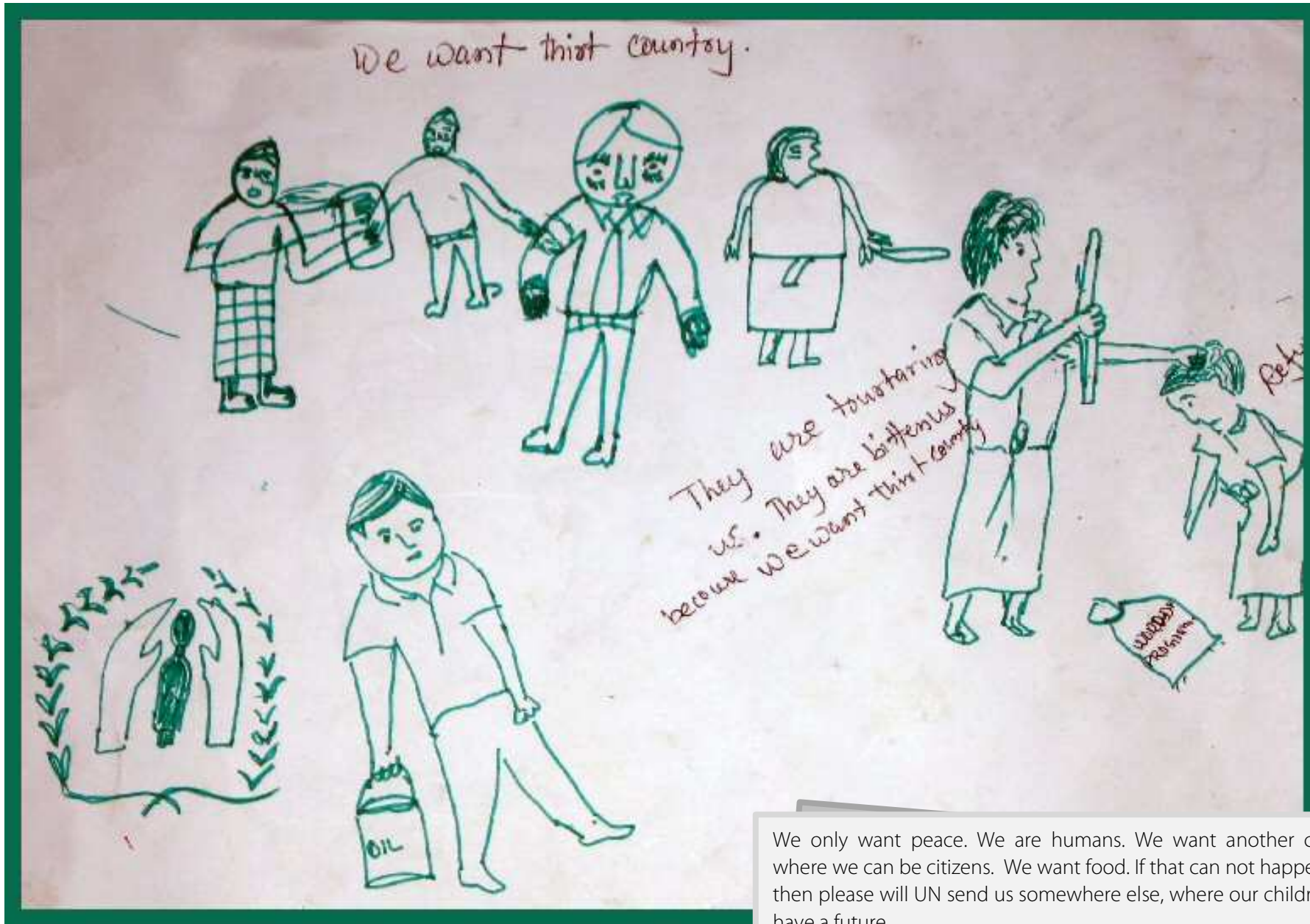


We need food and shelter, security and education. We want to work, to be able to travel outside the camp. We want to visit our families. We want to live without fear. Yesterday there was trouble in the camp. You all went back to Cox's Bazar and were safe. We had to stay in fear.





We need food but we do not have cooking pots – the villagers took them. But what use is food without security. We can not work, we can not get money to buy things we need, we can not send our children to school. It is a terrible prison and there is no future. We have been here for 15 years!

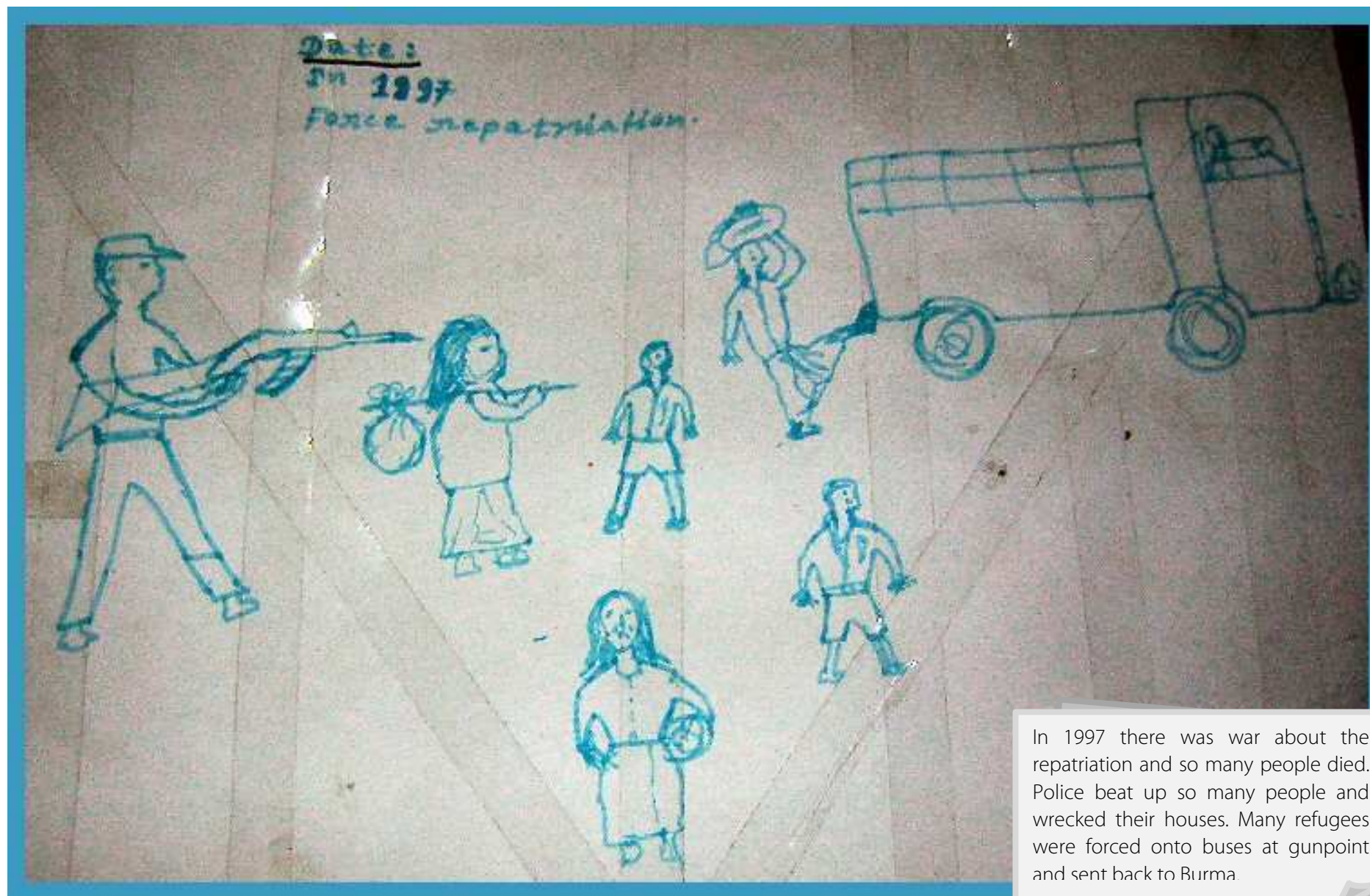


We only want peace. We are humans. We want another country where we can be citizens. We want food. If that can not happen here then please will UN send us somewhere else, where our children can have a future.

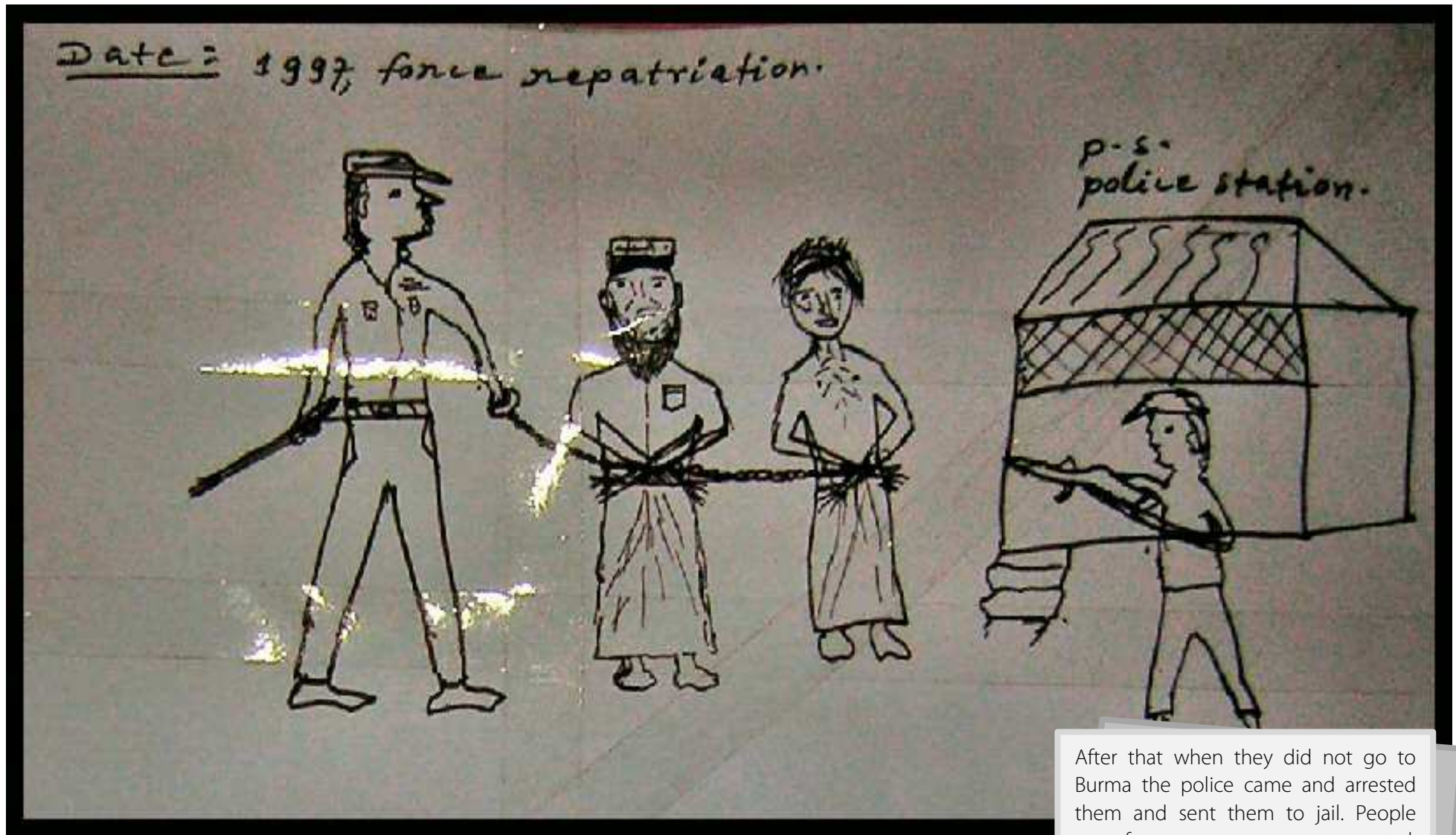
## APPENDIX 2. PERSPECTIVES ON REPATRIATION



The refugee family leave Burma by boat to escape the violence. They flee to Bangladesh believing that because they share a common religion that there will be safety in Bangladesh. But when they arrive they continue to face many problems. Life is no good in Bangladesh.



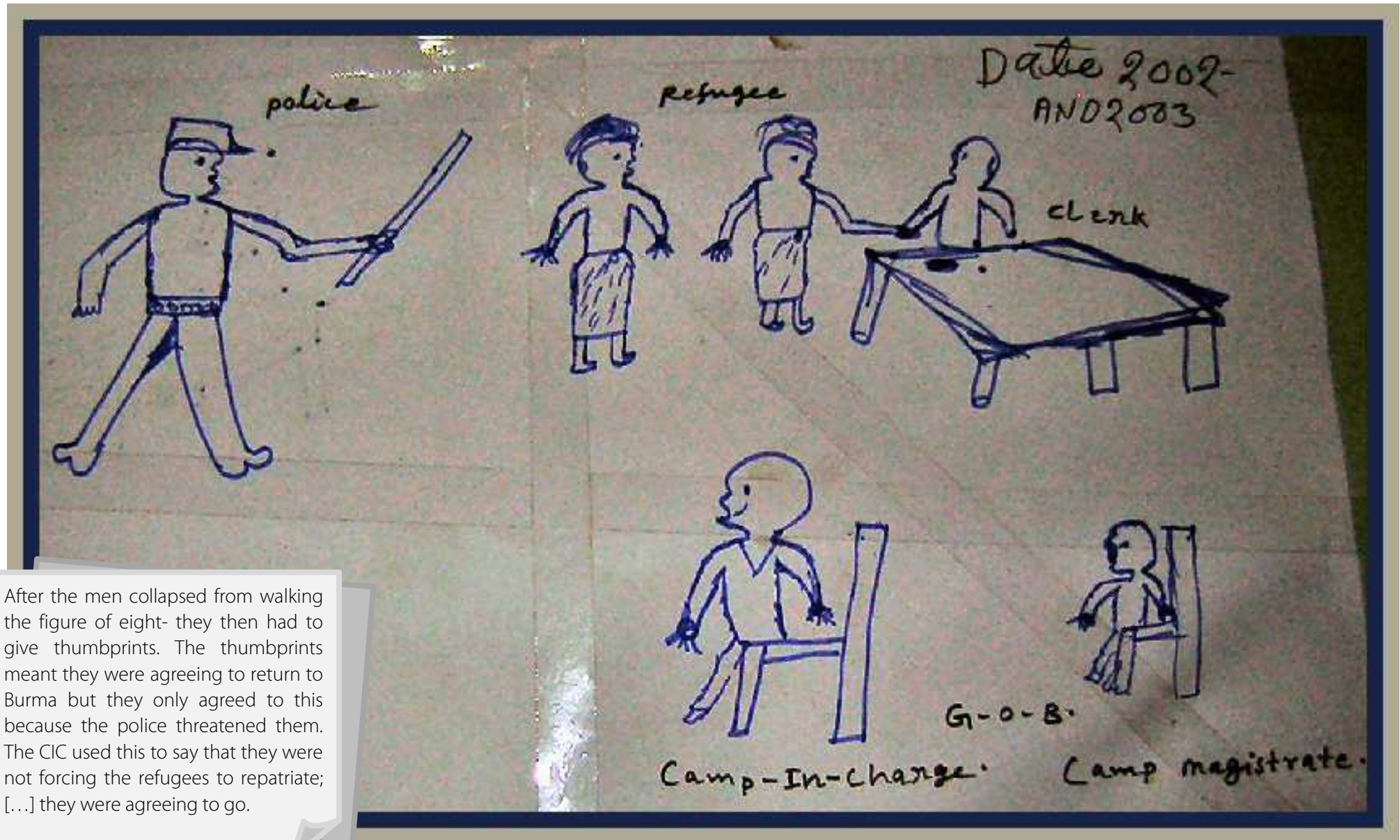
In 1997 there was war about the repatriation and so many people died. Police beat up so many people and wrecked their houses. Many refugees were forced onto buses at gunpoint and sent back to Burma.



After that when they did not go to Burma the police came and arrested them and sent them to jail. People were from many camps were arrested. 5000 people were put into jail.



In 1997 the police draw a figure of 8 on the ground and told them to walk around "the 8" from 8am to 5pm. Men were the ones made to walk because they didn't agree to go to Burma. The men got headaches and fell down and were sick.



After the men collapsed from walking the figure of eight- they then had to give thumbprints. The thumbprints meant they were agreeing to return to Burma but they only agreed to this because the police threatened them. The CIC used this to say that they were not forcing the refugees to repatriate; [...] they were agreeing to go.



The refugees were threatened, arrested and beaten by police when they had protested that MSF were being sent away from the camp. The CIC and the authorities objected to MSF. They took the refugees MRC registration numbers and forced them to say that they did not want MSF. MSF were helping the refugees and that's why the CIC wanted them to go.



### APPENDIX 3. SAFETY IN BANGLADESH



Inside the camp when women go for water, they are then taken and beaten and raped.

The men can't do anything because they will also be beaten and have false allegation and go to jail.

If they have the security in the camp, then this would not happen to the women.

If the men are in jail the women are in danger. If the men were in their houses the women would be safer.

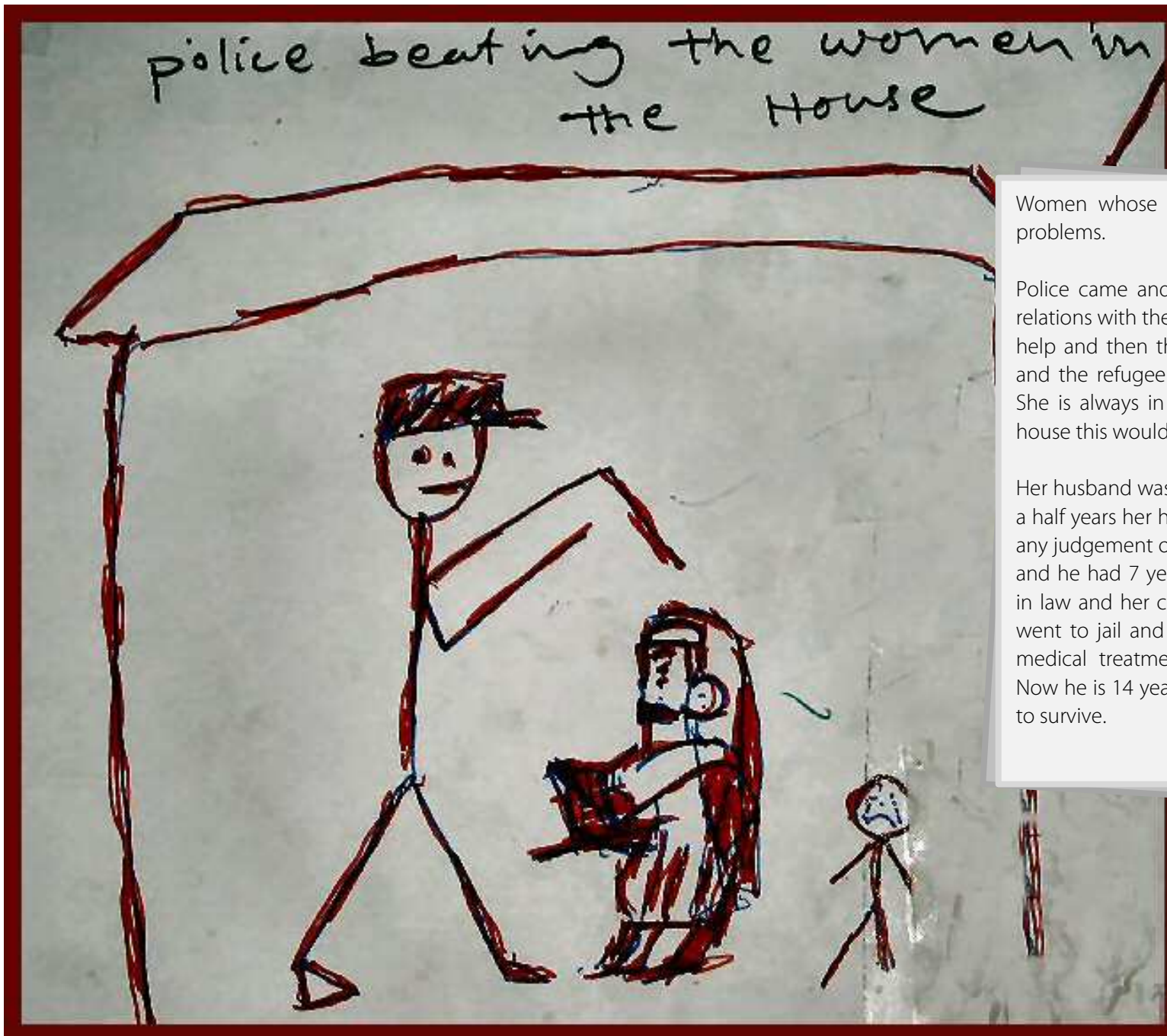
The mahjees and villagers sometimes falsely accuse men so they can send them to jail, then the mahjees and villagers can take their wives and daughters.



This is a woman whose baby was in born in jail.

When she didn't want to go back to Burma a false case was filed against her. Then she was afraid so she went outside the camp and she went to UNHCR in Cox's Bazaar but there was nobody in the office. So then she went to RRRC but she was arrested outside the office and brought to the camp again. She was kept in police custody. She was pregnant at this time. After that she was sent to the jail where the baby was born".

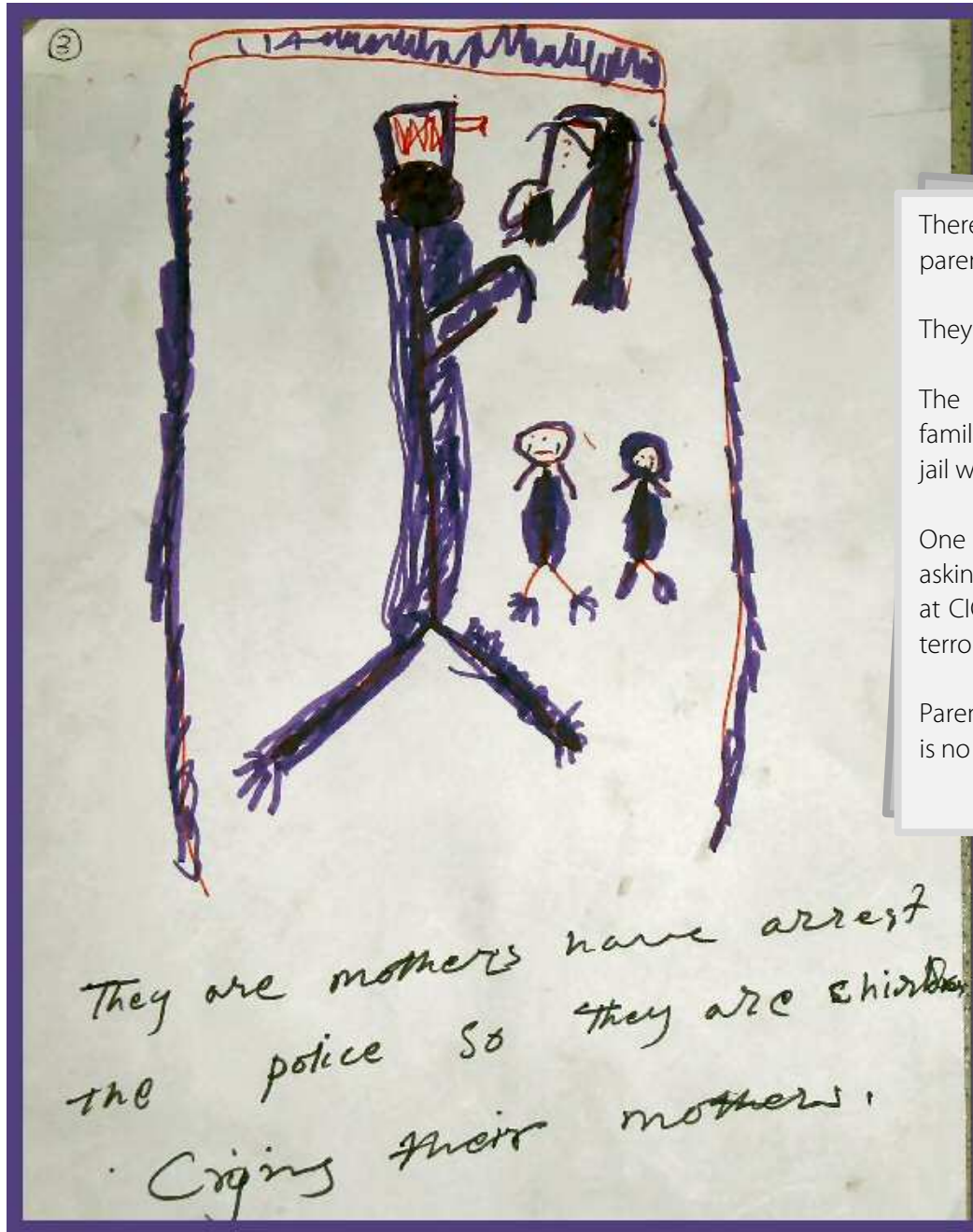
"There were 70 women in a room smaller than this. They had to sit without moving in this room. They had not enough water to wash, when the children passed the stool there was no water to clean. They had 1 meal a day.



Women whose husbands are in jail face great problems.

Police came and told the lady to have physical relations with the police and then she shouted for help and then they gathered and came to shed and the refugee came and the police ran away. She is always in fear. If her husband was in the house this would not happen.

Her husband was falsely sent to the jail - for 3 and a half years her husband was in jail and didn't get any judgement or solution and then he had a trial and he had 7 years. She has no father or mother in law and her child was sick when her husband went to jail and then her child because of poor medical treatment became physically disabled. Now he is 14 years old. [...] It is too tough for her to survive.



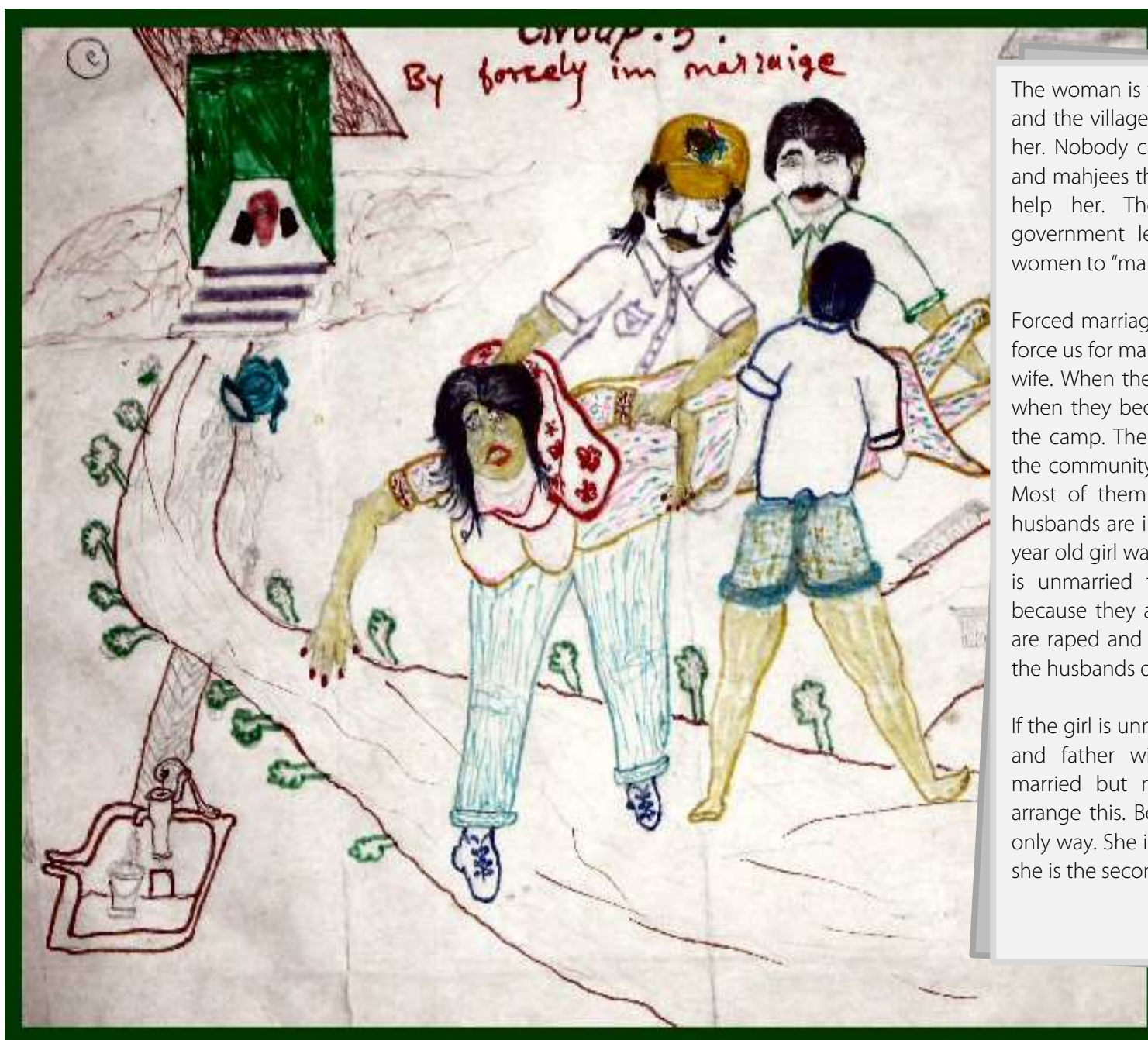
There are so many children in the camp whose parents are in jail.

They are crying for their mothers.

The CIC announced on loud speaker that any family who would look after children of people in jail would be punished.

One woman, when she was in jail had her son asking to come to see her and he was beaten also at CIC office. They said because your mother is a terrorist you will also be a terrorist.

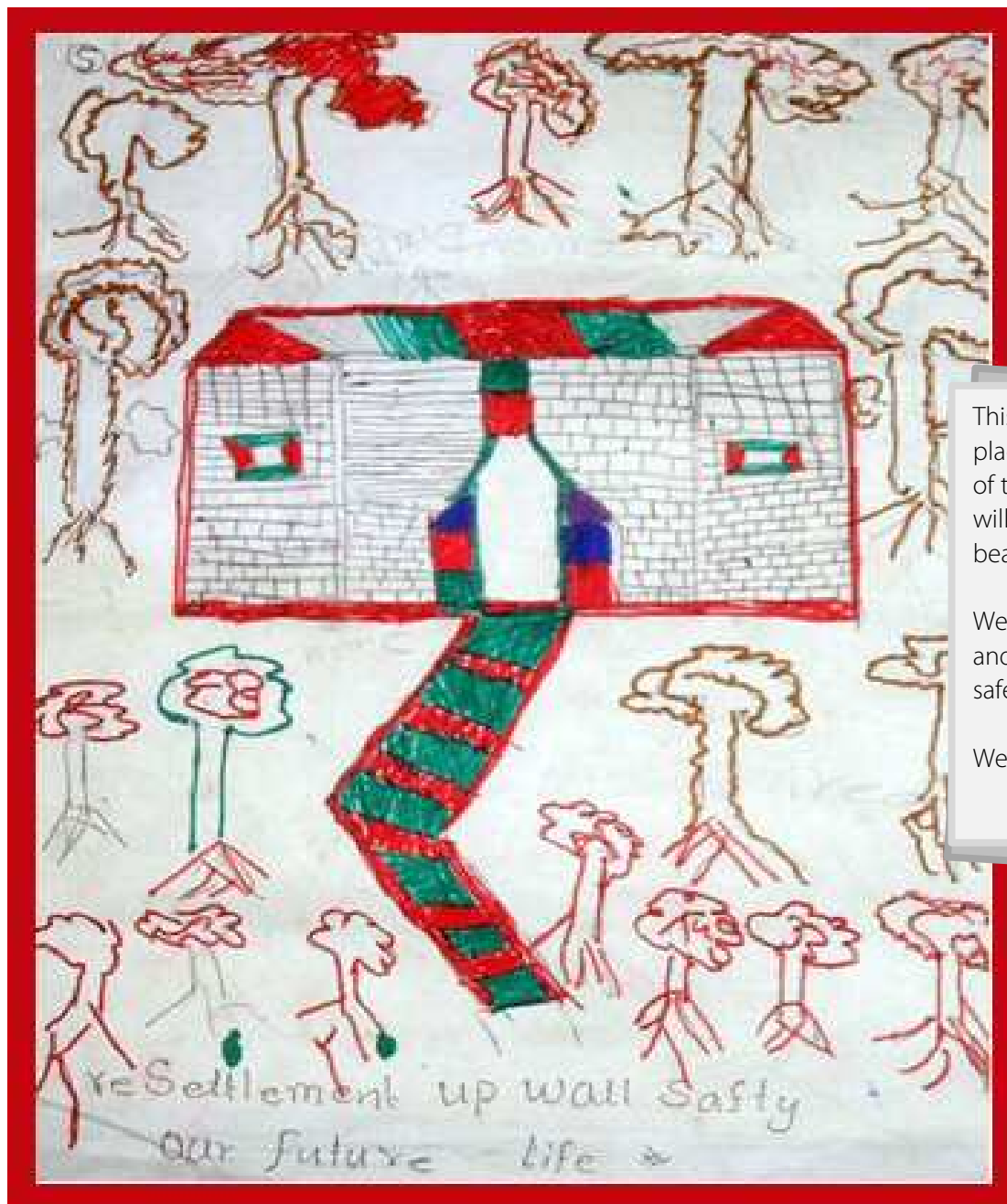
Parents are afraid for their daughters when there is no one to protect them.



The woman is trying to get to the latrine but the mahjee and the villager, they take her. Sometimes they also rape her. Nobody can come to help the women. The police and mahjees threaten the refugees and they are afraid to help her. They cannot do anything because the government lets this happen. The villagers force the women to "marry".

Forced marriage is like a torture to us. Villagers especially force us for marriage. They just take us and say you are my wife. When the villagers take away the women and then when they become pregnant they send them back into the camp. The community do not want them back into the community. They have nowhere to go in the camps. Most of them are young women and women whose husbands are in jail and are aged about 12, 15 or 20. A 7 year old girl was raped by villagers recently. Also if the girl is unmarried then getting her married is a problem because they are not allowed to get married once they are raped and pregnant. And the ones who are married, the husbands do not want them back.

If the girl is unmarried she passes her life with her mother and father without getting married. She should be married but not whoever she wants, the Imam will arrange this. Because she has no way and so this is the only way. She is made to marry an older man. Sometimes she is the second or third wife.



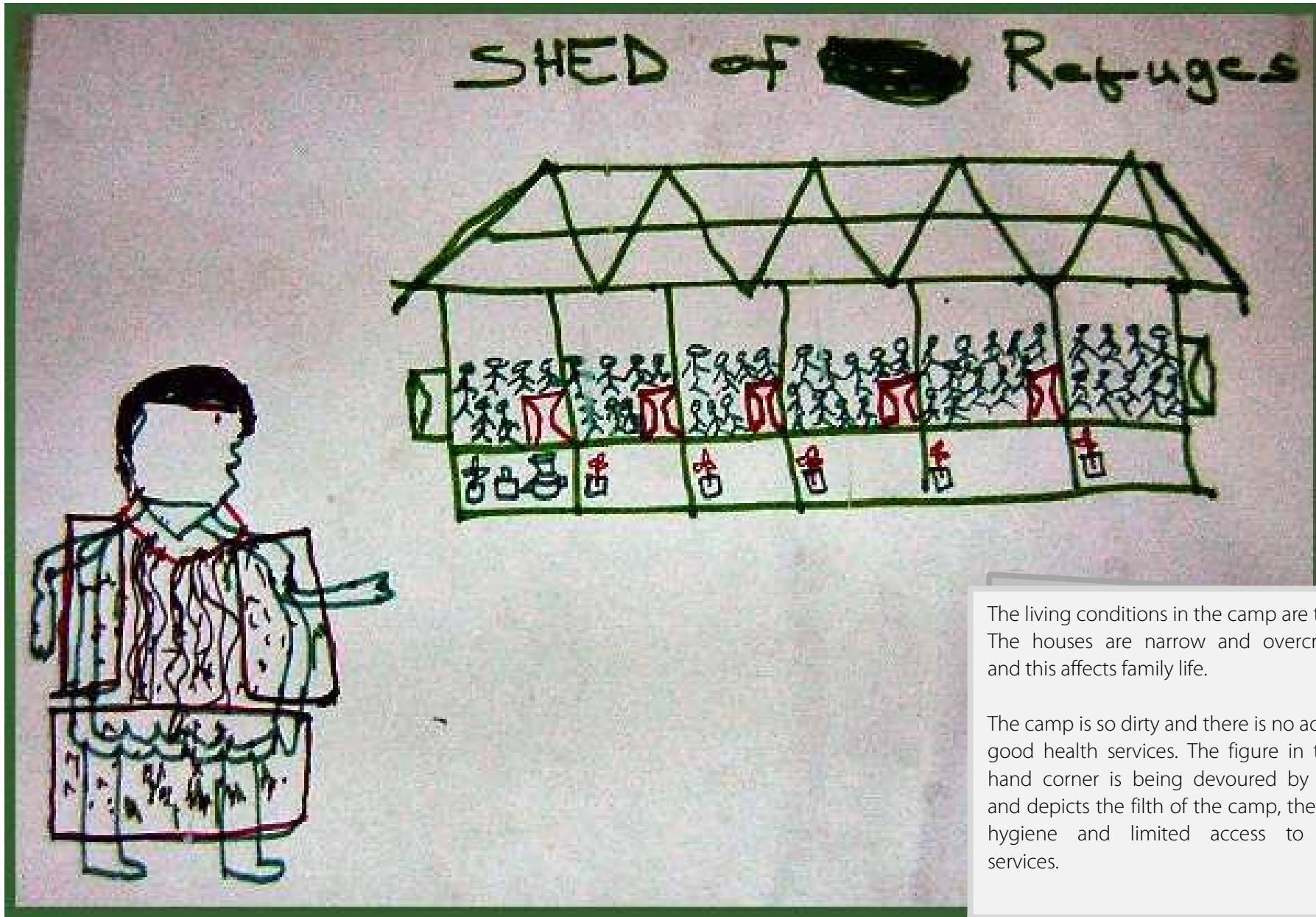
This picture shows the safe place - this place will be very charming, all the sides of the house will be charming and there will be beautiful scenery, a house, a beautiful place.

We want a place where we will be safe and secure - where our children can be safe.

We don't care where it is.

**APPENDIX 4. FAMILY LIFE**

There is no peace or safety in the camp as long as the Mahjees have power. The community lives in constant fear of forced repatriation. The Mahjees will not allow them to have peace. Those who have been forced back to Burma come back again as it is not safe there. But there is no safety for them in Bangladesh. No work rights and no livelihood. The Mahjee who is dragging the woman by her hair to force her to agree to repatriation remains in power today.



The living conditions in the camp are terrible. The houses are narrow and overcrowded and this affects family life.

The camp is so dirty and there is no access to good health services. The figure in the left hand corner is being devoured by insects and depicts the filth of the camp, the lack of hygiene and limited access to health services.



If conditions in Bangladesh were better, if there was safety and security and the refugees could move outside the camp to work and earn a living, then life would be much better.

The desire to learn and use skills, to earn money and be independent was strongly expressed - The "rich guys" (donor countries) cannot always help - so we want to do something for ourselves.

First there must be safety and security, the rights to move and live and work outside the camp and then it would be good to learn new skills and to find work.

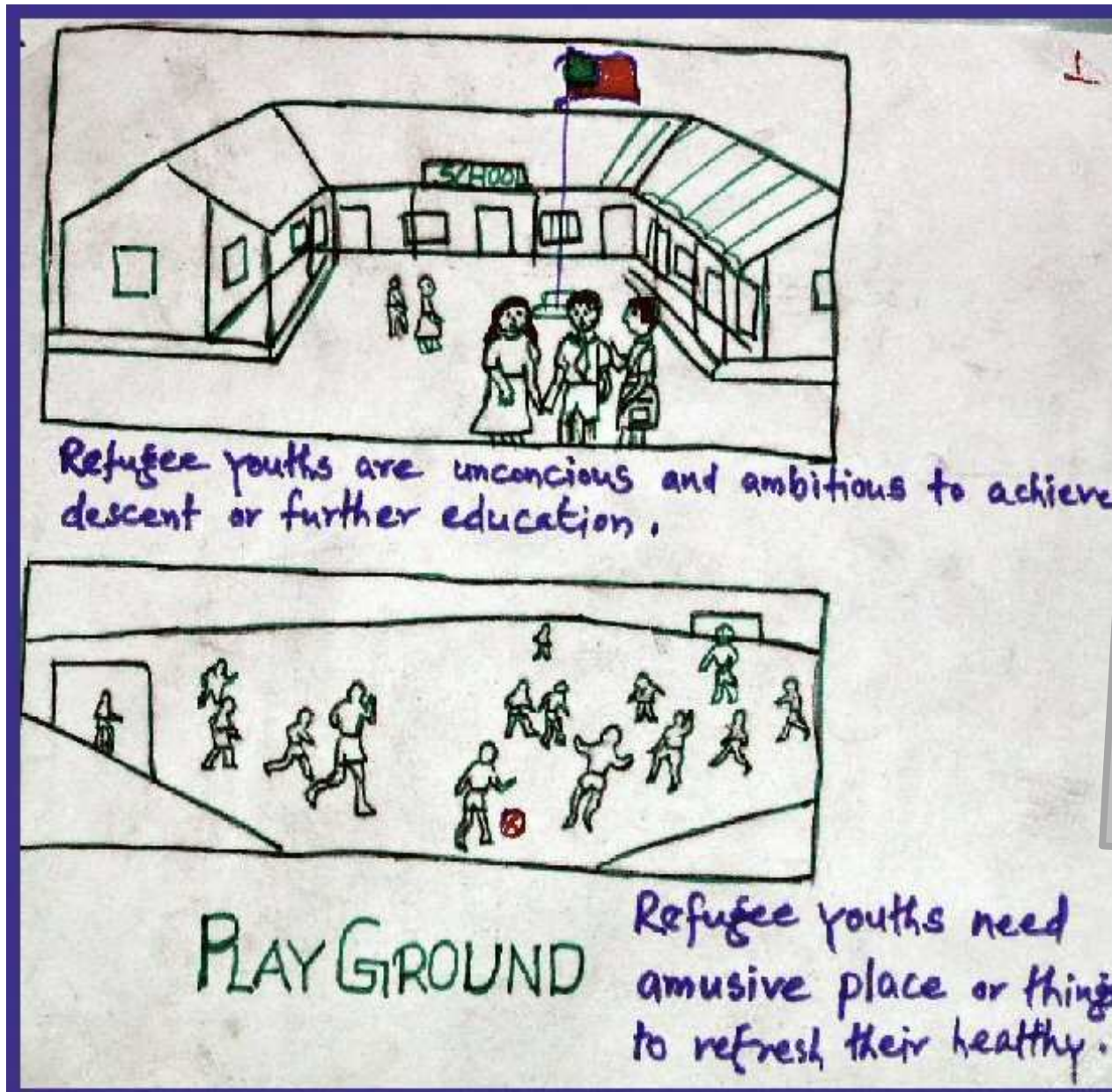


We ~~are~~ want a beautiful life. if you help us we will be  
Good ~~and~~ luck



In this picture the father is loving his daughter and the mother is loving her son. Same as what we want. When I came from Burma I was 2 years old. I wasn't able to fight against the Burmese to say that I am a citizen of Burma but we faced the same problem in Bangladesh. No citizenship. In this situation what should we do? My parents are so much older now but they have to live more so they need a safe place to live. They have never seen or heard of peace in Bangladesh. They need peace. They are hoping that if you help them they will be happy later.

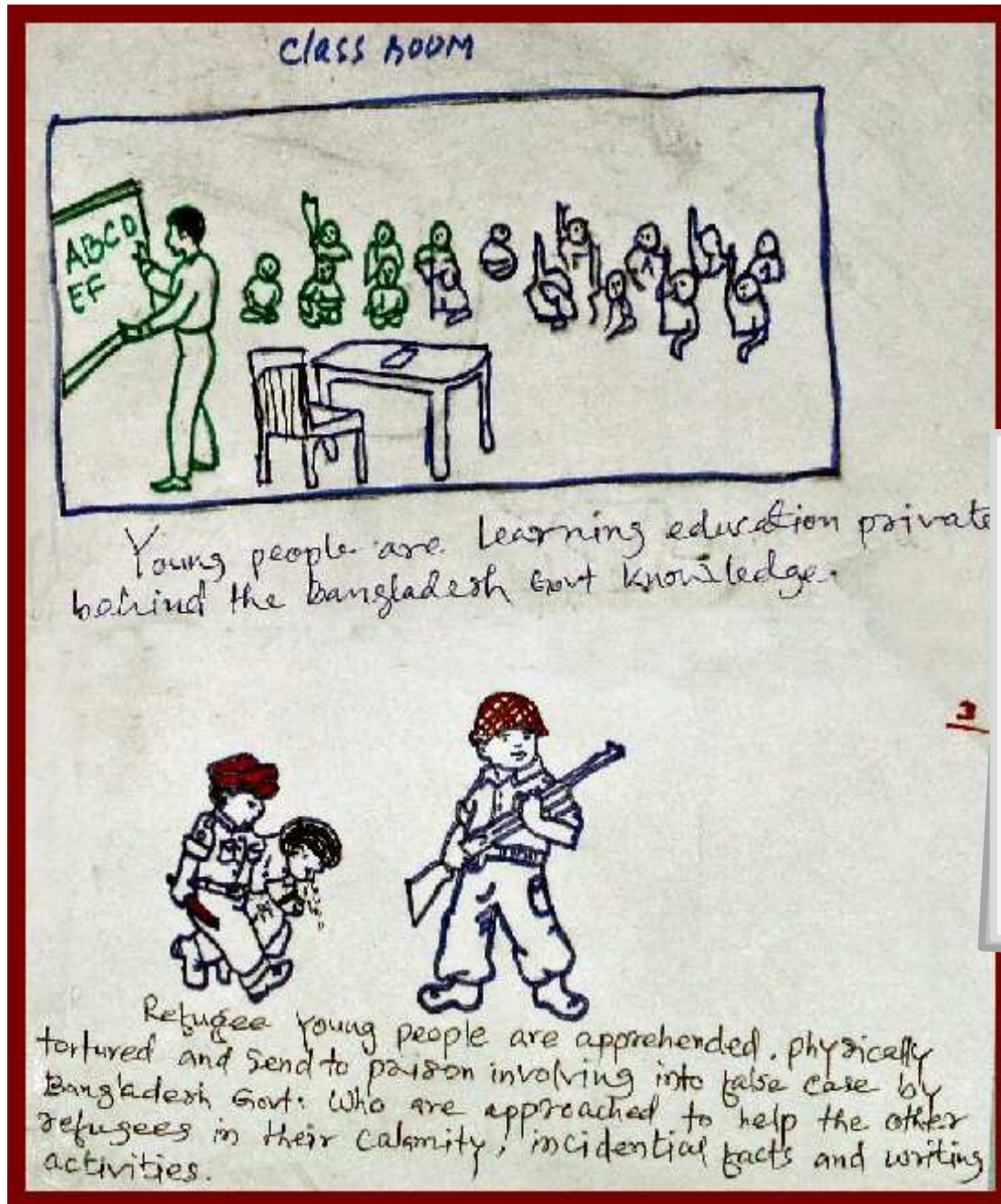
## APPENDIX 5. YOUNG PEOPLE, EDUCATION & THE FUTURE



"Any improvement is a dream"

We want to make our children better through education. We also hope they can go to high school and university. Also that they can get scholarships so they can study overseas.

We also need places where the children can play. Girls need somewhere to jump and play with dolls. Children need something to keep their minds active and to be healthy.



Young people are learning education private behind the Bangladesh Govt knowledge.

Refugee young people are apprehended, physically tortured and send to prison involving into false case by Bangladesh Govt. Who are approached to help the other refugees in their calamity, incidental facts and writing activities.

We have opened private schools due to the restrictions. Educated people can help each other. Because the Bangladeshi government does not allow these schools the teachers are in danger. The teachers face false allegations being made against them.

Bangladeshi government breaks up the private school because it does not want the people to be educated.

Picture - 1

& 2.



A.

Mother is feeding her children well to send them school.

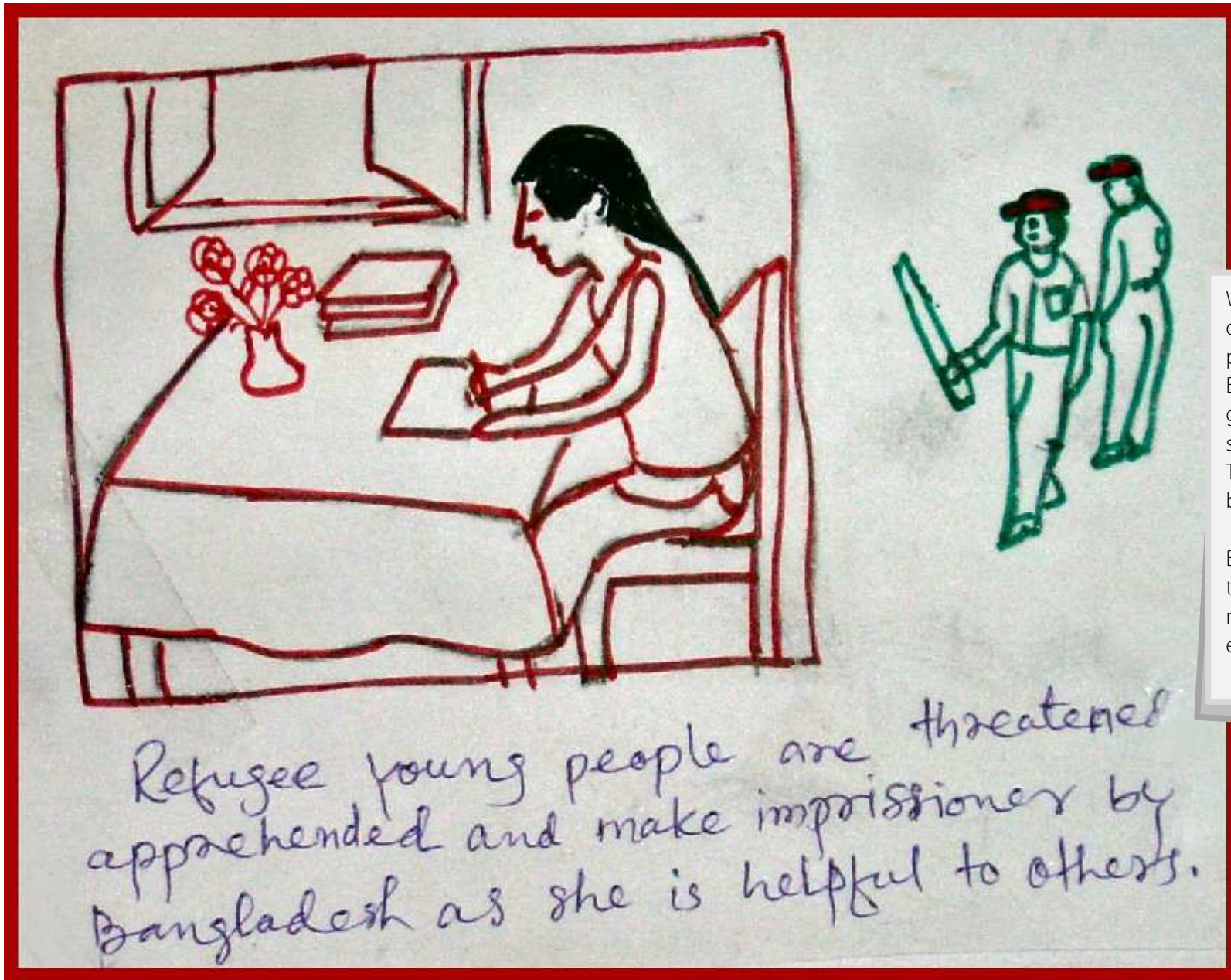


B.

Mother is dressing her children for the school.

Parents have a responsibility to provide for children, give them food when they go to school and clothes to get them ready. It is important to be clean, to be ready for education. With only oil, salt, rice and pulse how can we get them ready for education?

Only by having these things can we make them ready for a proper education. We only get one pair of clothes each year from the UN and we are blocked from going out to get clothes for our children.



We have opened private schools due to the restrictions. Educated people can help each other. Because the Bangladeshi government does not allow these schools the teachers are in danger. The teachers face false allegations being made against them.

Bangladeshi government breaks up the private school because it does not want the people to be educated.

Educated students can use computers and internet but they are deprived of this here. We need technology and professional training and activities in the camp. This will help us get good jobs in the future and it will also help others in the camp. For instance with medical skills, we will be able to look after others.



A:



B:



C:

Technology and professional activities are needed to help to make things better immediately and in the longer term.

We want educational opportunity as better educated will enable us to achieve more, improve, and improve the community. With education you can get good jobs, both men and women. With education we can achieve this.



We want computer technology to make things better.

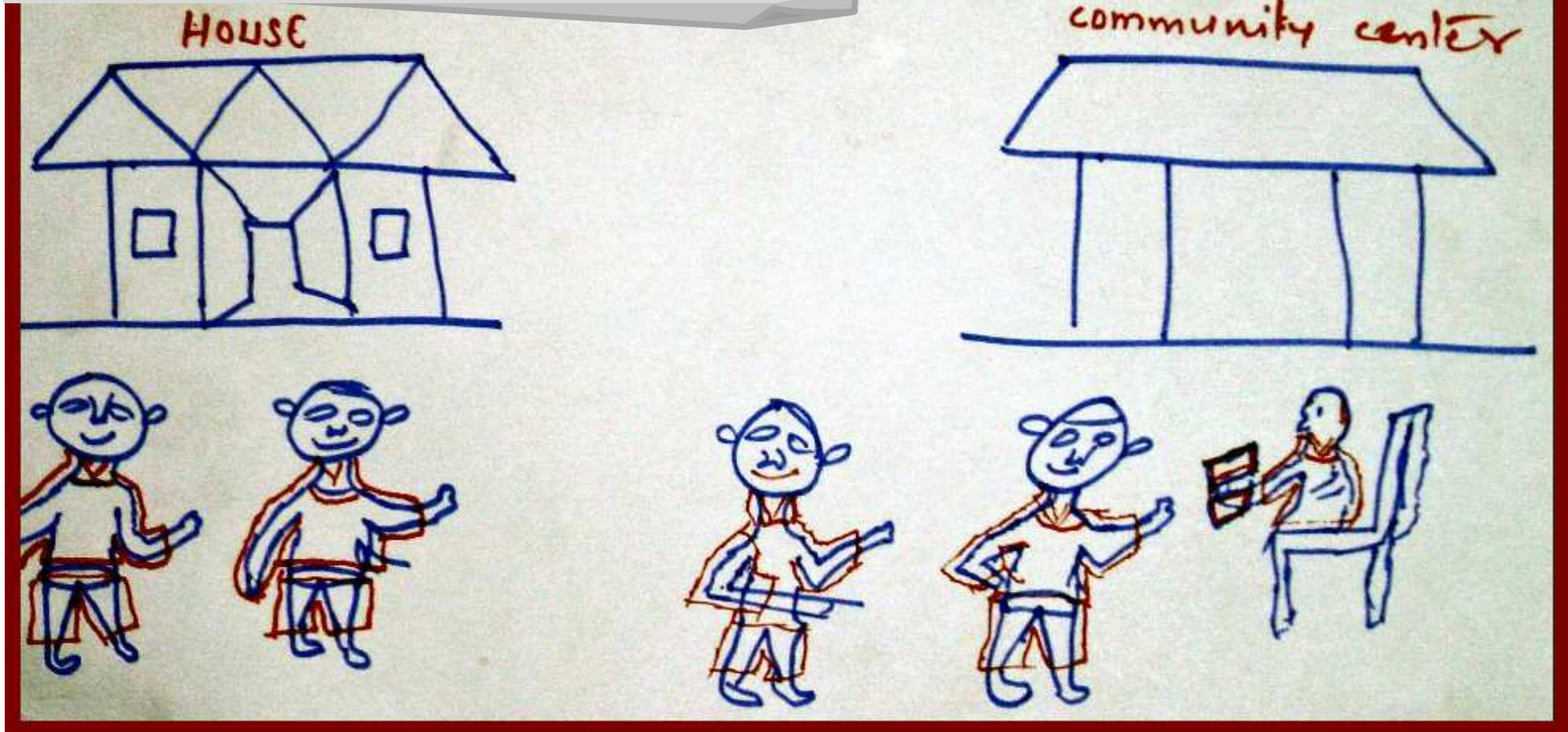


And professional activities are needed to make things better



Because we are obliged to stay here we would like the UN to help provide materials.

UNHCR and other implementing partners need to provide us with better educational facilities, materials and opportunities. UNHCR and others can provide books and notes. With this we can achieve more and more



## APPENDIX 6. HEALTH







We need proper education so that we can learn to be medical assistants and to help ourselves.



Learning Medicine is needed  
to help to make things better.

We used to work as medical assistants with MSF. We want this to happen again.

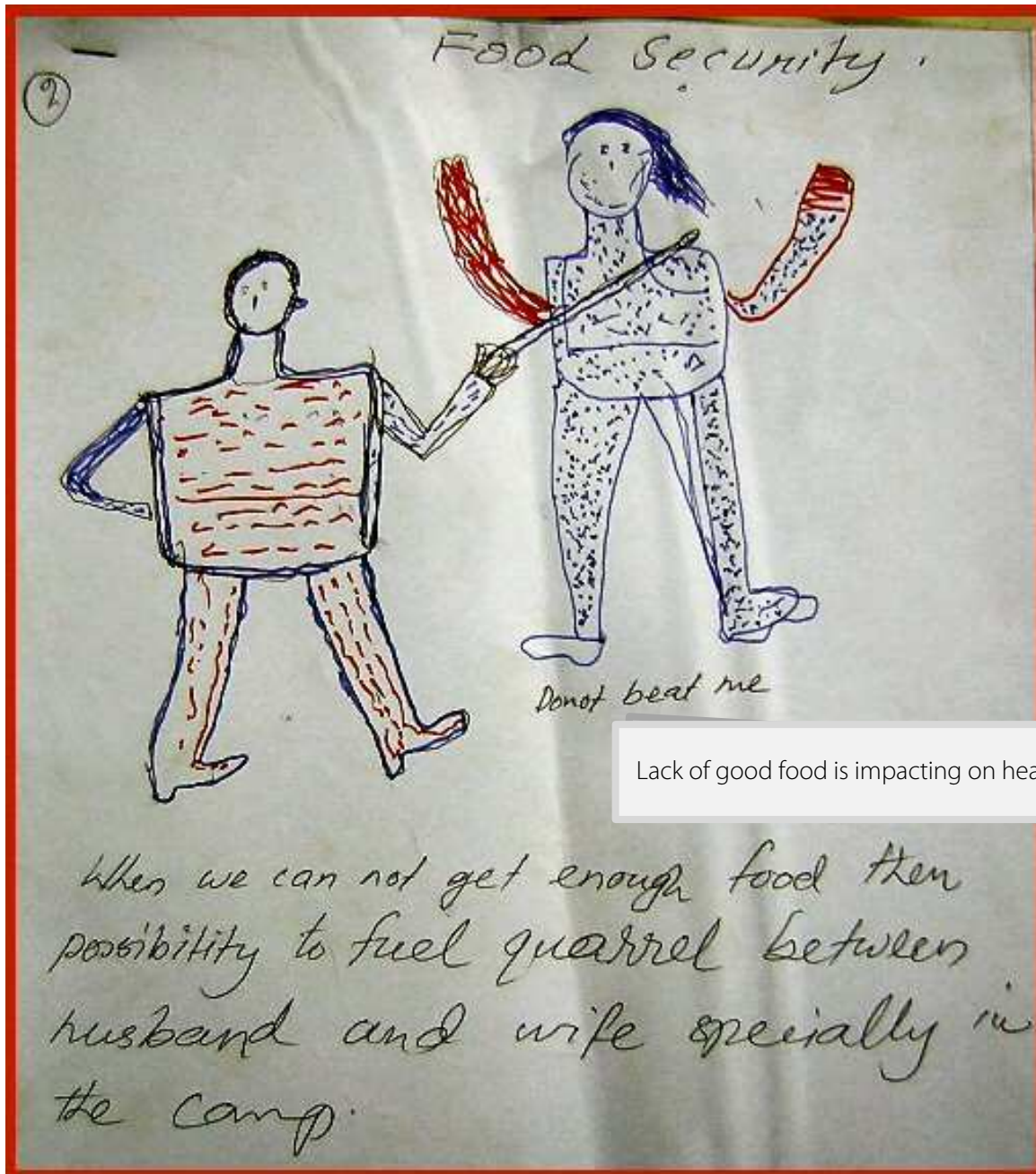
## APPENDIX 7. FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

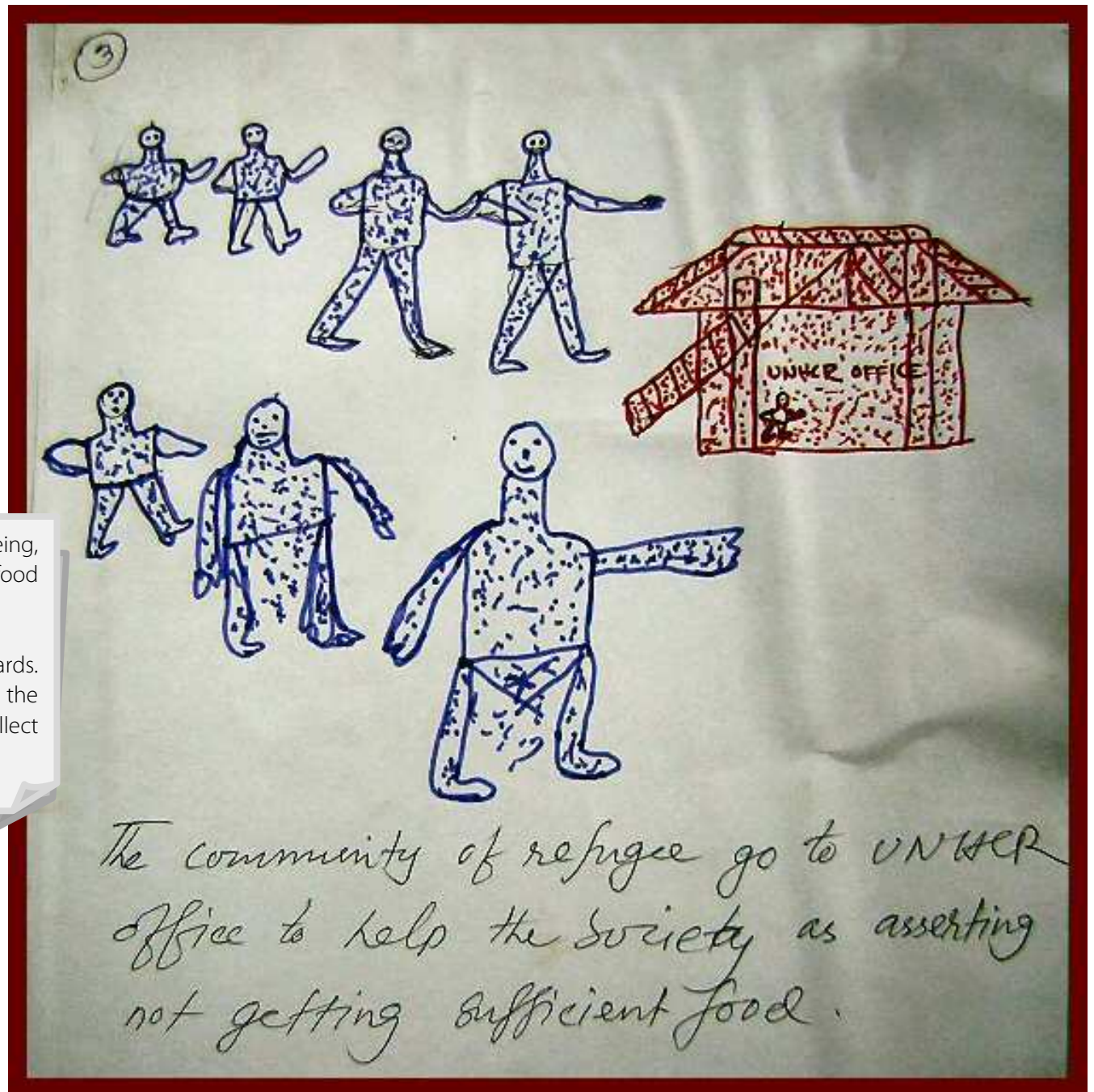
Male.  
① The main reason why people don't have sufficient food especially in the camp, because the Red Crescent Society of ~~BD~~ measure our ration with neglect/duplicate measuring pot. We don't have sufficient food.



We are getting not only torture in the camp but also not enough food.

BDRC worker is prohibiting not to give sufficient price as full pot of rice. Another reason can't earn money to adjust and have sufficient food in the family



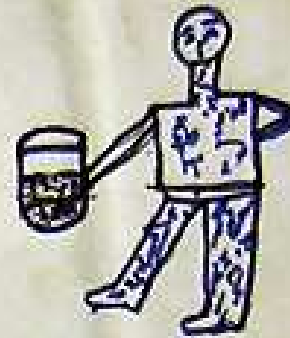


Food is the basic need of a human being, and many people don't have sufficient food because we do not receive full rations.

There are issues relating to ration cards. Those working outside are punished by the mahjees as absentees thus unable to collect the following month ration.



giving half pot .



Volunteers of RCS

This picture depicts how rations are not given in full, and also type of food is inappropriate and needs supplements with vegetables.

Also female are not able to get sufficient Ration from red crescent society

Females are also discriminated against in that sense. Of all needs, food is the essential one.

The community as a whole is weak and can not support one another.



③ <sup>female or</sup> Individually when a female can not get enough food then <sup>she</sup> she may be sicknes and may faced with various diseases as lack of vitamin

3



Due to this situation, refugees have to seek work or beg outside to obtain additional means, and are also being beaten for that.

UNHCR should convey to donors what the situation is with regard to food and durable solutions. This illustrates how the food issue is also related to abuses.

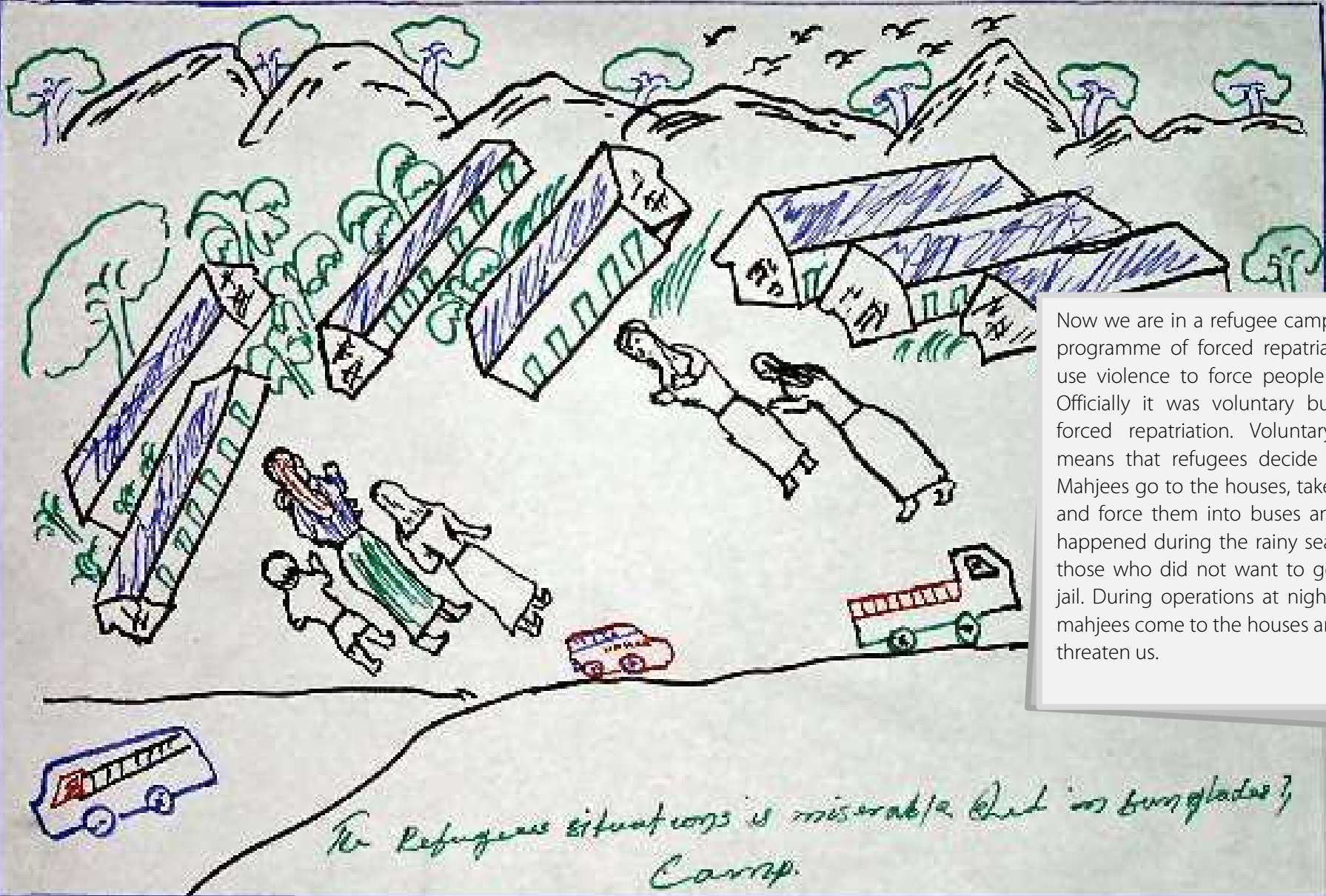
The community <sup>of</sup> Refugee help live such as: They visit house to house particularly in female but how she is suffering. Except this they can't help <sup>but any food</sup> more because the community are also Refugee.

## APPENDIX 8. PERSPECTIVES ON RESETTLEMENT

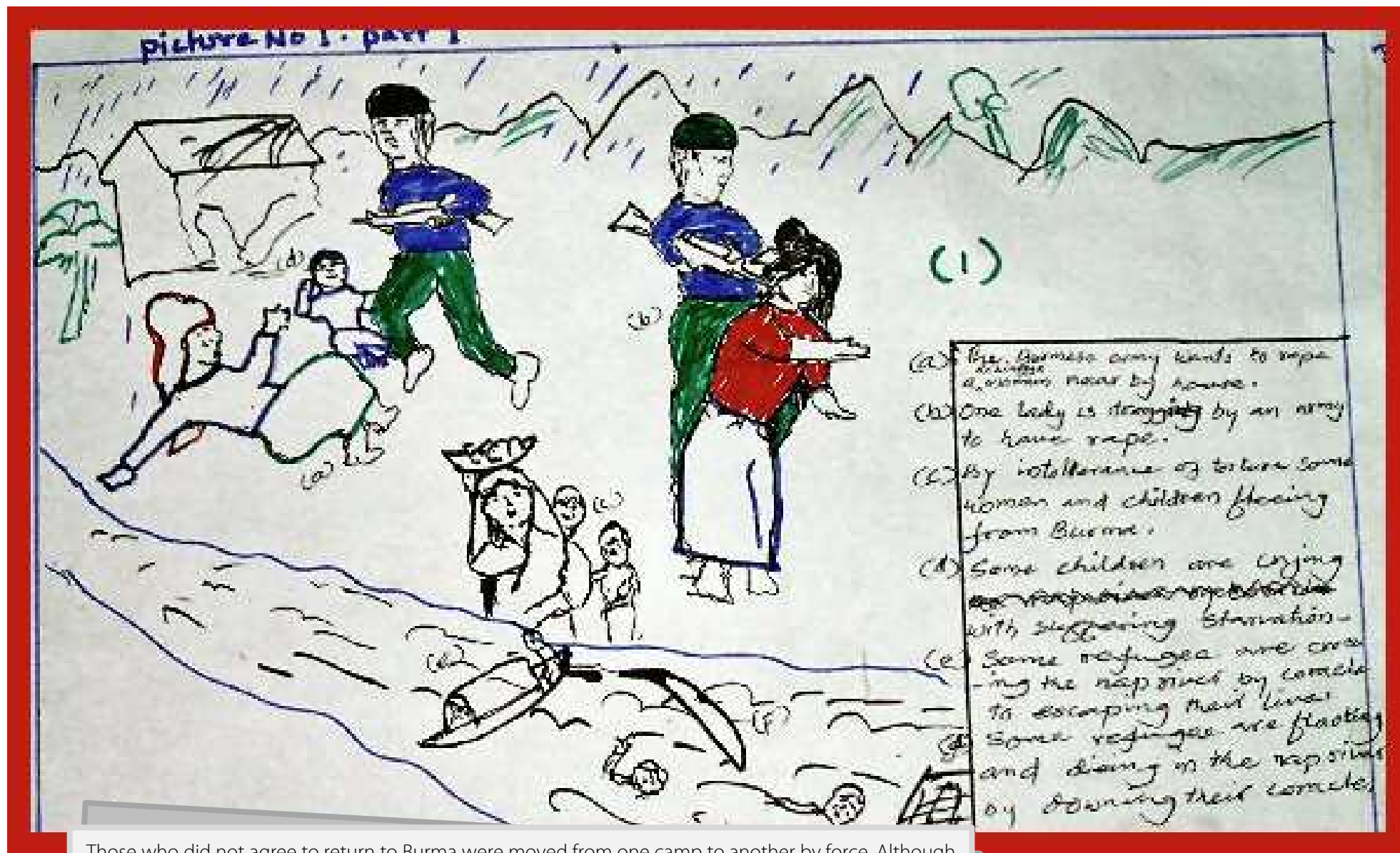


What are the conditions in Burma now? The military in Burma are torturing people. They are taking women from their houses to the forests and raping them. For that fear some vulnerable women are crossing the river to get shelter in Bangladesh. Boats are capsized while crossing the river and some women drown.

Picture: (3) - part (1)



Now we are in a refugee camp. There was a programme of forced repatriation. Mahjees use violence to force people to repatriate. Officially it was voluntary but they made forced repatriation. Voluntary repatriation means that refugees decide but in reality Mahjees go to the houses, take the refugees and force them into buses and trucks. This happened during the rainy season. Some of those who did not want to go were put in jail. During operations at night security and mahjees come to the houses and torture and threaten us.

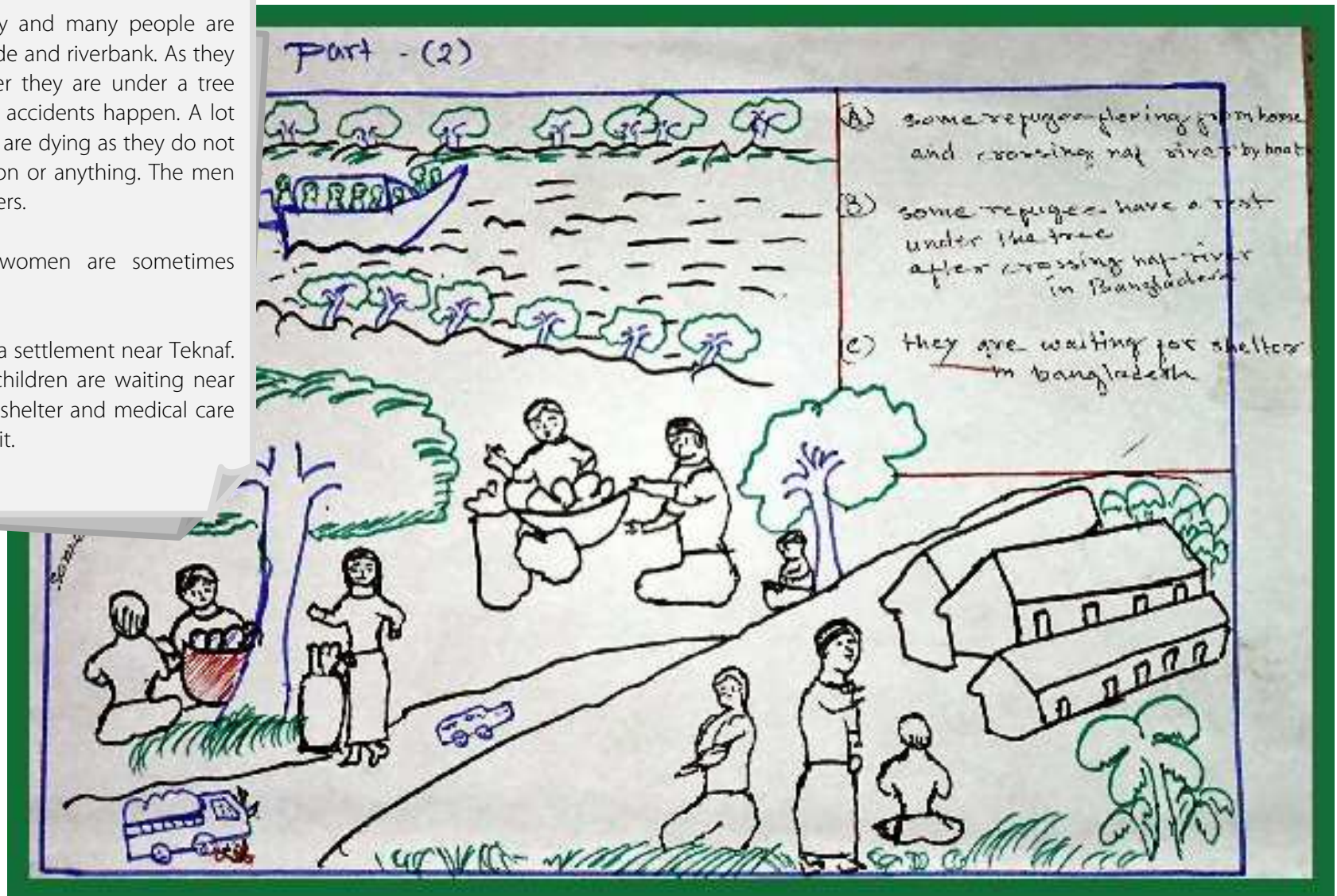


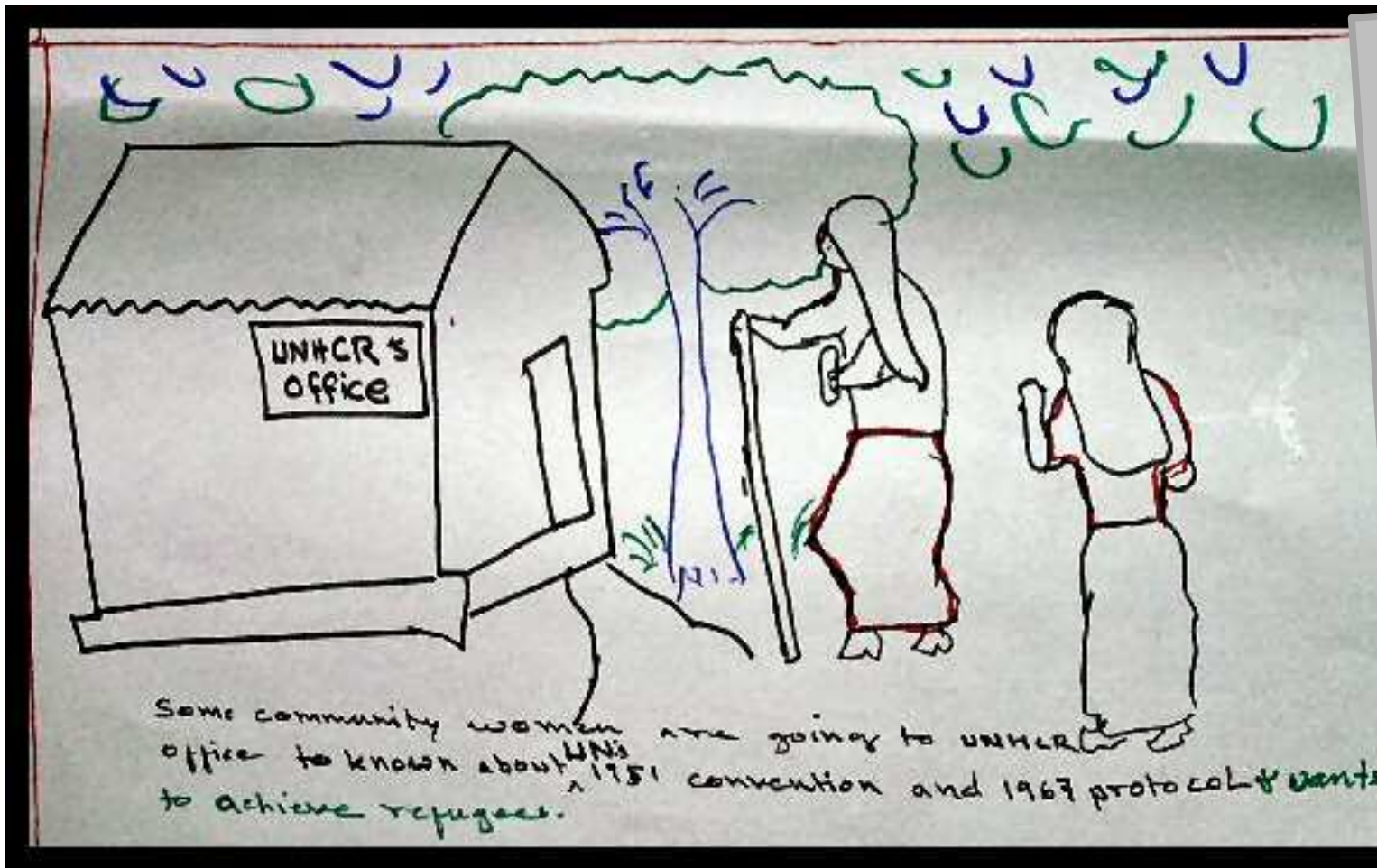
Those who did not agree to return to Burma were moved from one camp to another by force. Although transferred they have not been given a proper place to live. They live like dogs. Belongings were taken by the mahjee. Family books of those who refused were taken by the authorities.

We left our country and many people are living on the roadside and riverbank. As they did not have shelter they are under a tree along the road and accidents happen. A lot of homeless people are dying as they do not get shelter, education or anything. The men are waiting for shelters.

In these shelters women are sometimes raped.

Still today we have a settlement near Teknaf. Men, women and children are waiting near the road asking for shelter and medical care but they do not get it.





Rohingyas need to be able to go to UNHCR to obtain refugee status and achieve durable solutions.

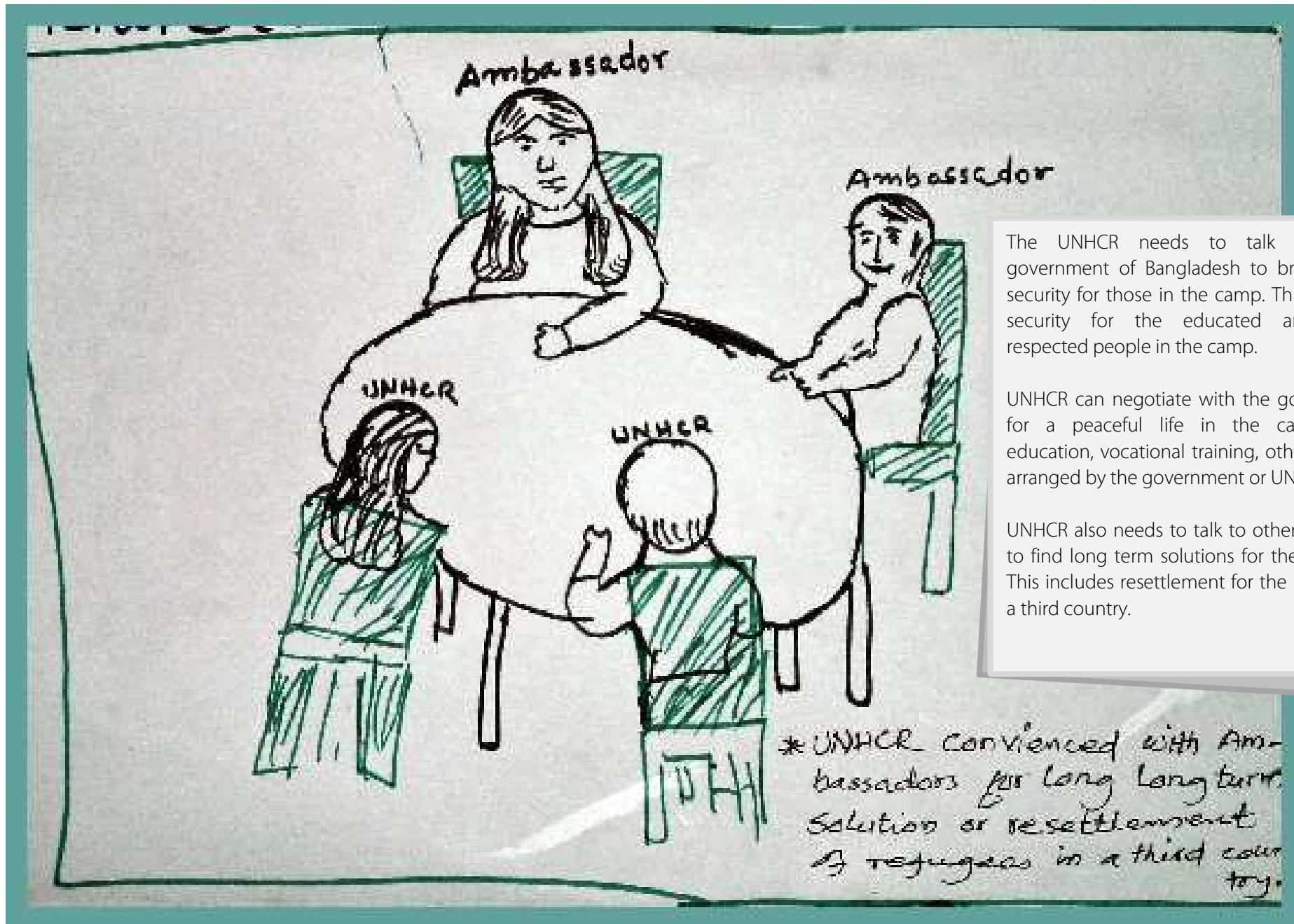
We are living our life like animals. We want to live like human beings and go to another place.

The educated people protest against repatriation and torture. They have been caught by the police and put in jail. Especially those who have been cleared, they do not get any justice if they approach the authorities. Who said they should not get any justice?

Those persons who say something about the conditions are threatened.

The Mahjees have all the facilities, can use supply water and electricity. They have a luxurious life. They also have modern beds to sleep on. We want to be freed from these torturing conditions.



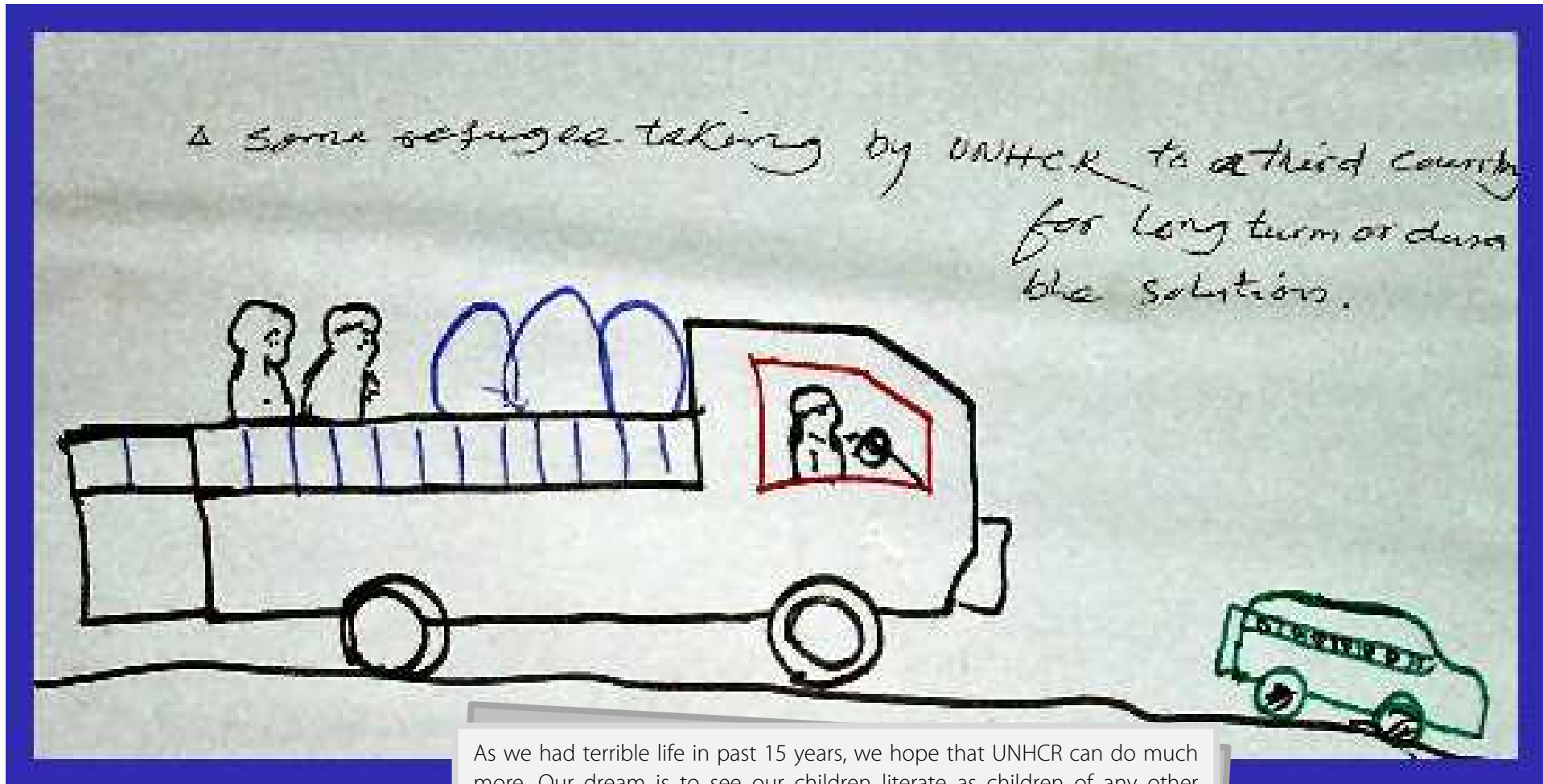


The UNHCR needs to talk with the government of Bangladesh to bring about security for those in the camp. This includes security for the educated and other respected people in the camp.

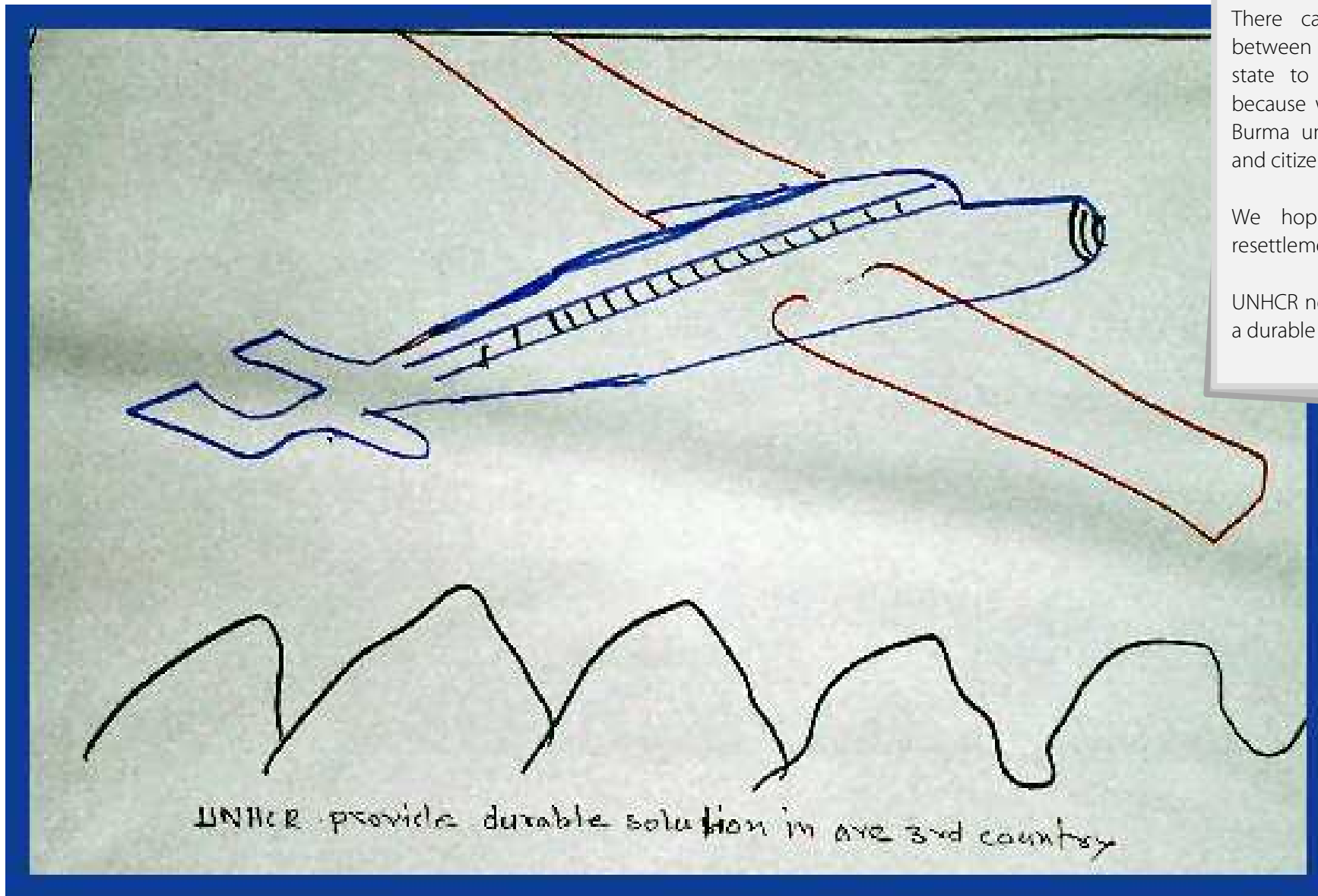
UNHCR can negotiate with the government for a peaceful life in the camp: start education, vocational training, other training arranged by the government or UNHCR.

UNHCR also needs to talk to other countries to find long term solutions for the refugees. This includes resettlement for the refugee to a third country.

\* UNHCR convinced with Ambassadors for long long term solution or resettlement of refugees in a third country.



As we had terrible life in past 15 years, we hope that UNHCR can do much more. Our dream is to see our children literate as children of any other country. We request to UN authority to think about that and we believe that UN can solve the problem.



There can be an agreement between UNHCR and another state to resettle us by plane, because we will not go back to Burma until we get democracy and citizenship.

We hope that we will get resettlement in a third country.

UNHCR needs to provide us with a durable solution.