

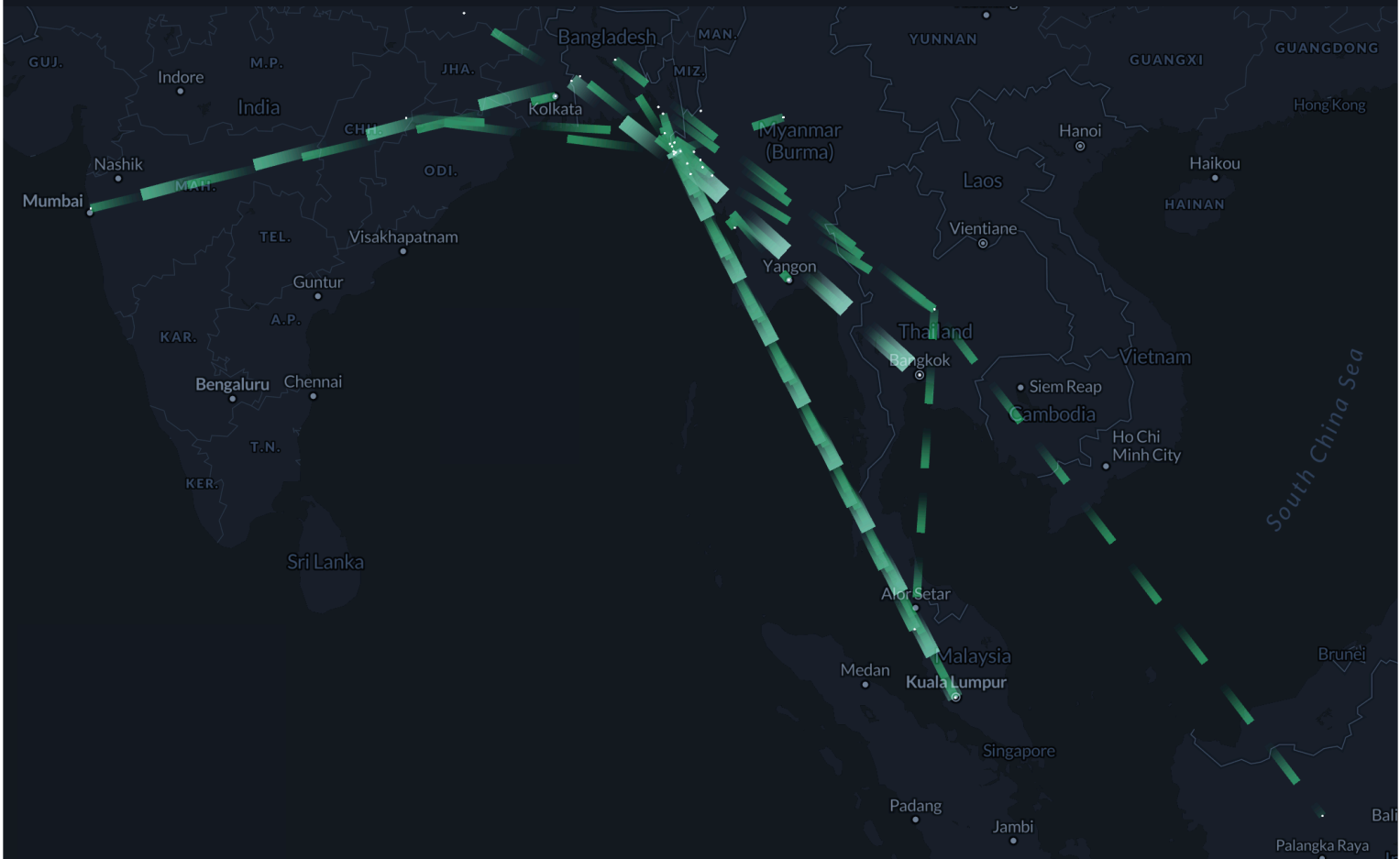


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MAPPING ROHINGYA MOVEMENT: COLLECTED DATA ON THE TRAFFICKING ROUTES OF A PERSECUTED POPULATION



**FREEDOM
COLLABORATIVE**

TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING. TOGETHER.

2022

MAPPING ROHINGYA MOVEMENT: COLLECTED DATA ON THE TRAFFICKING ROUTES OF A PERSECUTED POPULATION

Data contributors: Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP)
 Rohingya Women Welfare Society (RWWS)
 Films 4 Peace Foundation
 and fourteen individual community activists

Special thanks to Muhammad Owasim Uddin Bhuyan for all the help coordinating with the partners involved, and for supporting us in collecting the relevant information.

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March 2022

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP)

OKUP is a community-centered migrant workers' organization based in Bangladesh. It began in 2004 as a platform for returnee migrants, rooted in the belief that unity would enhance their empowerment and contribute to the protection of their rights and dignity. OKUP currently implements projects in 20 Upazilas (sub-units) across 12 districts in Bangladesh (Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Narsingdi, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Manikganj, Faridpur, Sylhet, Khulna, Bagerhat, Cox's Bazar), and offers emergency supplies, counseling, information and advice.



Rohingya Women Welfare Society (RWWS)

RWWS is a women-led organization established in 2018, which supports women and offers protection against domestic violence and trafficking in Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.



Films 4 Peace Foundation

Films 4 Peace Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and sustainable development in Bangladesh. Founded in 2010 as WITNESS Bangladesh by peace activist and film-maker Pervez Siddiqui and director Monis Rafiq, it has produced films on human rights and peace, run youth mobilization and community engagement projects, and organized film festivals, trainings and dialogue for promoting sustainable development and a peaceful Bangladesh.

Individual community activists

In addition to the above organizations, this report includes information from community organizers and activists on the ground. Because of the sensitive nature of their work we are not listing their names, however, we do want to express our great gratitude for their support and willingness to share their knowledge with us.



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INTRODUCTION

Rohingya Muslims are one of the many ethnic minority groups in Myanmar and represent the largest percentage of Muslims in the predominantly Buddhist country. However, they are denied citizenship and have faced persecution and violence for several decades. In August 2017, deadly attacks by Myanmar's army sent hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from Rakhine State across the border into Bangladesh in the north, and Thailand and Malaysia to the south; in January 2020 the UN's top court ordered the government to protect the community from this ongoing genocidal violence. Although Myanmar's authorities have denied the allegations, human rights groups have determined that there is evidence to show that the country's actions do indeed amount to genocide.

The military crackdown, in which thousands of people are believed to have been killed and hundreds of villages burned to the ground¹, has put many Rohingya at risk of human trafficking. In 2013, a Reuters investigation² found reasonable grounds to believe that a human-trafficking syndicate, which included government officials, committed crimes against humanity in Malaysia and Thailand against tens of thousands of Rohingya men, women and children. The investigation says that traffickers used old fishing vessels to transport thousands of Rohingya refugees without adequate food, water or space, committing torture and, in some cases, rape, on land and at sea. The victims believed they were being taken to Malaysia where they hoped to find work or reunite with family members, but were instead held at sea or in camps where their options were to raise thousands of dollars for their release, be sold on, or die. Traffickers murdered, tortured and abused captives, and many died by suicide.

In 2015, Thai authorities announced the discovery of a mass grave near the Malaysian border containing more than 30 bodies of suspected trafficking

victims, believed to be Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshi nationals. Just a few weeks later, the Royal Malaysian Police announced the discovery of 139 graves and 28 suspected human-trafficking camps in Wang Kelian, Perlis State, Malaysia.

In 2021, according to sources on the ground, the trafficking of Rohingya is still very much ongoing.

This report is an attempt to bring together data on the human trafficking and migration routes from Myanmar to Bangladesh and other destinations in South and Southeast Asia.

Freedom Collaborative has supported grassroots and frontline organizations and activists in collaborative data gatherings on relevant routes since 2017, resulting in reports focused on Kenya, Malawi, Somalia and Malaysia. This data gathering exercise and publication is a continuation of our efforts to create a global data set and victim journey map, and to familiarize organizations with structured data-sharing efforts.

This particular data collection has been the most challenging so far. We are extremely grateful to our partners for trusting us and being willing to share their information with us, given the sensitive nature of the situation on the ground and the risk involved. We are truly thankful for everything you do.

While the captured data is by no means exhaustive and the humanitarian catastrophe much larger than we are able to document, we hope this report will bring further attention to the issue. We also hope that the data collection will encourage others to share information on what they are seeing in their own local contexts so that we, as a community, can move closer to filling data gaps and building a comprehensive overview of relevant routes and human trafficking activity in Asia and beyond.

¹ Médecins Sans Frontières. MSF surveys estimate that at least 6,700 Rohingya were killed during the attacks in Myanmar. <https://www.msf.org/myanmarbangladesh-msf-surveys-estimate-least-6700-rohingya-were-killed-during-attacks-myanmar>.

² Szep, Jason & Marshall, Andrew R.C. "Special Report: Thailand secretly supplies Myanmar refugees to trafficking rings." Thomson Reuters. December 5, 2013. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-rohingya-special-report-idUSBRE9B400320131205>.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Data sources

All the participating organizations and individuals work directly with Rohingya refugees and victims of human trafficking, providing a range of services in camps and other locations.

The data submissions are based on cases that organizations have worked on directly as well as information they have obtained through their work in the field. A number of submissions are based on interviews with Rohingya migrants themselves, which were conducted by activists and researchers in Cox's Bazar. The data set should not be seen as comprehensive or used to understand patterns as a whole. However, it seeks to provide a descriptive picture of what we do know, which we hope will be of use to those seeking to make impactful interventions.

Data collection

The three participating CSOs and fourteen individuals submitted their data through Freedom Collaborative's Victim Journey data collection tool. All of the 43 submissions included the following data points:

- City and country of origin (origin)
- Transit points
- City and country of final destination/exploitation (destination)
- Mode of transportation used
- Type of exploitation
- Industry of exploitation

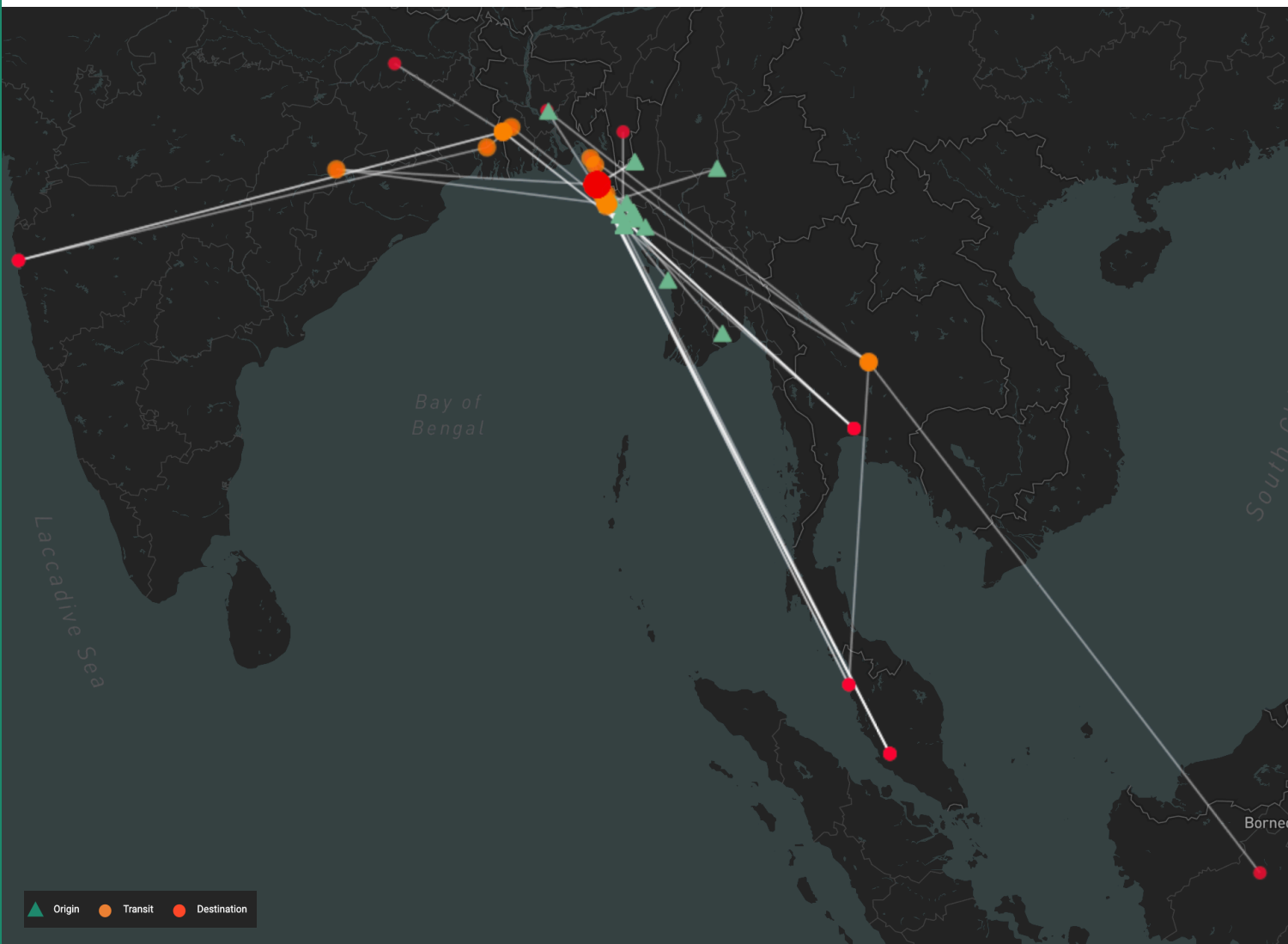
In addition, for submissions based on recent cases, information on recruitment, and length and cost of the migration journey, has also been entered.

DATA SUMMARY

In total, the participating partners submitted 43 routes that relate to Rohingya from Myanmar. The data identifies Cox's Bazar as a main destination and transit location from where Rohingya migrants are taken to other countries in the region, including India, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia.

The majority of submissions included transit locations, however, it is challenging to capture the difficult journeys from Myanmar's Rakhine state to Bangladesh and onwards. Many of the locations are very remote and it is challenging to discover and record the exact village names and locations that Rohingya families passed through when fleeing the country.

The visualization shows locations of origin (green), transit points (orange), and final destinations (red).



Map 1: Overview of all submitted routes and locations

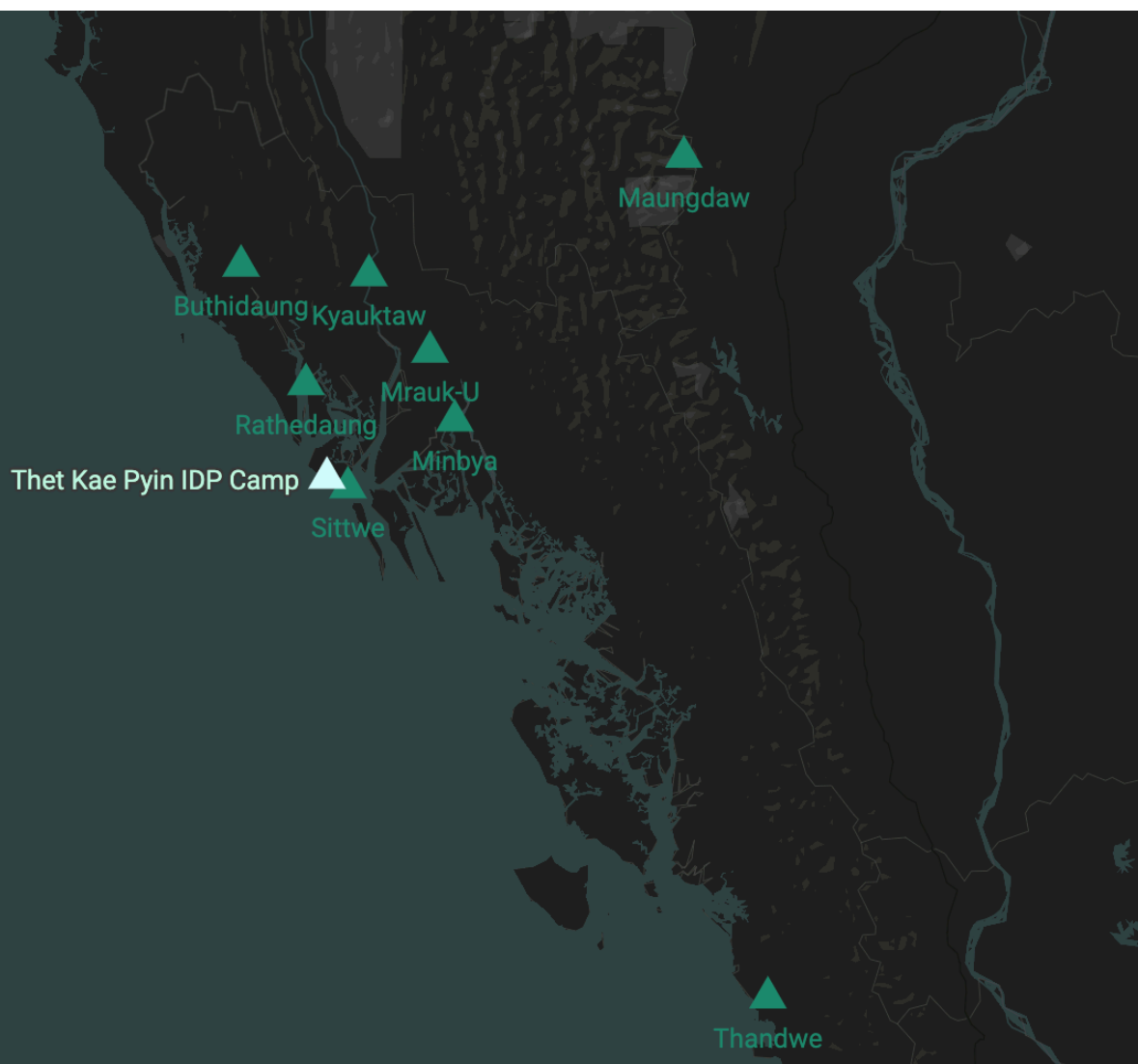
ALL ORIGINS IN MYANMAR

The submitted data included eight locations of origin in Rakhine State in Myanmar. They are Maungdaw (16 submissions), Sittwe (seven submissions), Mrauk-U (three submissions), Rathedaung (three submissions), Buthidaung (two submissions), Minbya (one submission), Kyauktaw (one submission) and Thandwe (one submission).

Three submissions mentioned Thet Kae Pyin Camp, outside Sittwe, where an estimated 100,000 Rohingya live in small temporary and makeshift shelters.

The identified locations are all towns, however, there are around 3,870 villages in Rakhine state, many of which have been destroyed over the past years. Some former villages have even been erased from official Myanmar maps and reclassified as part of nearby towns.

The submitted data did not include any specific village names, however, many of the Rohingya refugees are from more remote locations outside the identified towns.



Map 2: All locations of origin in Myanmar

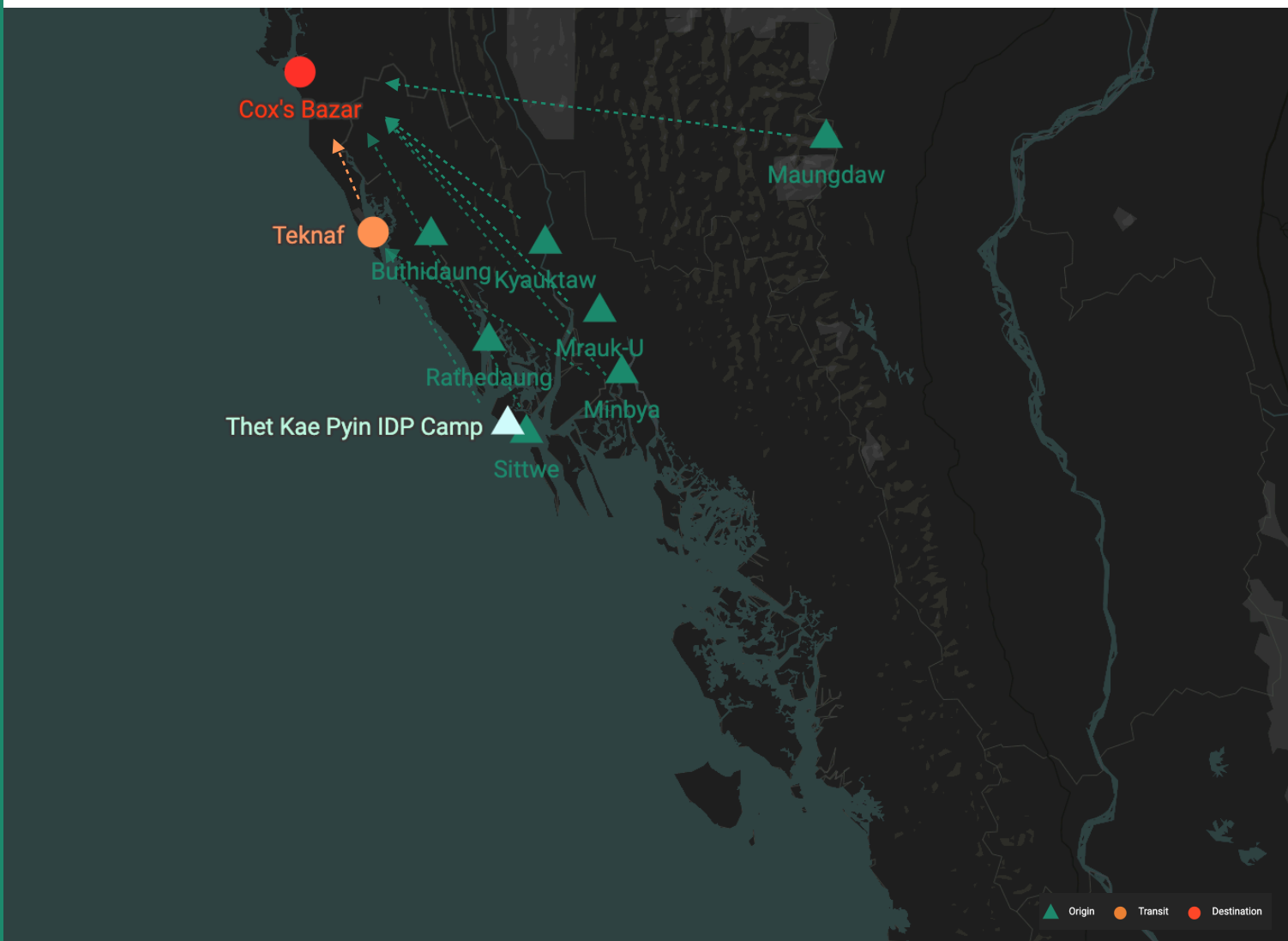
COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH AS A MAIN DESTINATION

In total, 22 submitted routes referenced Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh as the final destination for Rohingya refugees from Rakhine state in Myanmar.

From Maungdaw, Mrauk-U, Sittwe, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, Minbya, and Kyautaw in Myanmar, the Rohingya migrants make their way either directly, or via Teknaf, to the Cox's Bazar camp.

In the referenced cases, the journey took the migrants between one week and one month on foot and/or passenger ship. It was usually facilitated by a system of coordinators and smugglers who were paid around 200,000 Bangladeshi Taka before the journey commenced.

During the journey and at the final destination, the Rohingya migrants experienced physical violence, sexual abuse and threats.



Map 3: Routes relating to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh as destination

SNAP-SHOT: COUNTER-TRAFFICKING WORK IN COX'S BAZAR

Bangladeshi NGO Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP) undertook training and capacity-building activities under its program "Human Trafficking Prevention for Rohingya Refugees" in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, during the period from February 2019 to January 2021.

To reduce the number of human trafficking incidents among Rohingya people in the camp, OKUP engaged key actors and stakeholders in its support-based project, which was designed to combat trafficking issues.

Primary project beneficiaries were women, men, and adolescent boys and girls, and vulnerable families from both Rohingya and host communities, while community leaders and key actors from Rohingya and host communities, including Majhies, Imams, teachers, counter-trafficking committee members, youth volunteers, civil society, and government counterparts such as law enforcement agency members, local government representatives etc., were the secondary beneficiaries.

The project was operational at Camp 23 (Shamlapur) under the upazila of Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

In an interview, Shakirul Islam, Chairman of OKUP, spoke about its recently ended program: "Under the project, a union-level Counter Trafficking Committee (CTC) was formed in Baharchara Union in the project camp area. The members of the committee played a very active role in curbing human trafficking. During the consultation meeting, the key stakeholders, including the members of the CTC, the Camp-in-Charge and the NGOs, admitted that the project

interventions contributed a lot to reducing the incidence of human trafficking in the area.

"Two notorious human trafficking spots in the project area have been abolished due to the project interventions. And the CTC incorporated the issue of human trafficking into the main agendas of the local committees on the prevention of drugs and terrorism. Therefore, human trafficking issues are regularly discussed at different levels, from school awareness sessions to law enforcement committee meetings, and upazila coordination committee meetings led by government executive officials.

"The CTC took the initiative to appoint a voluntary group to patrol the human trafficking spots in the project area. They set up high powered lights in the spots to remove darkness at night and prevent any activity relating to trafficking. Apart from the CTC, 12 sub-committees formed by 240 representatives of the Rohingya community played active roles in reducing human trafficking incidences in their own community, while 12 community volunteers now have the capacity to continue information dissemination beyond the project period."

Education campaigns among vulnerable groups in the camp raised awareness about the methods used by traffickers to entrap victims; as a result of these campaigns and other project interventions, a Counter-Trafficking Committee was formed which appointed night guards to patrol notorious trafficking hotspots, two of which were then closed down.

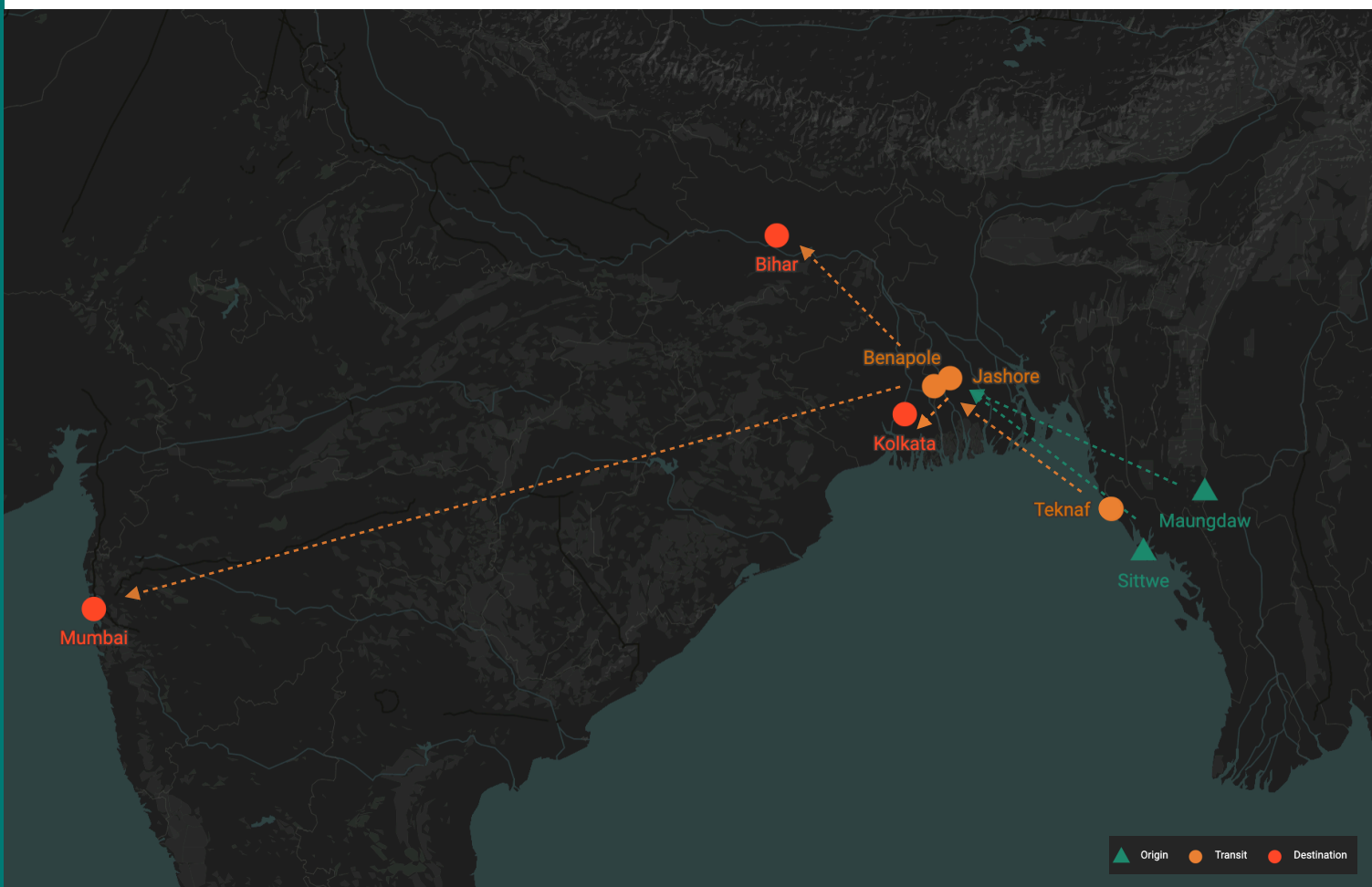
MYANMAR TO INDIA

Four submissions were made concerning routes from Sittwe and Maungdaw in Myanmar, via Benapole, Teknaf, and Jessore in Bangladesh, to Kolkata, Mumbai and Bihar in India.

These were cases of human trafficking of female survivors that the participating organizations worked on directly. In these cases, the journey took the migrants around one month, and they paid 50,000 to 100,000 Bangladeshi Taka to multiple labour brokers

and smugglers. According to the case information, the payment was split between before departure and at arrival at the final destination.

In India, the Rohingya migrants worked in the commercial sex industry or as domestic workers, and experienced sexual abuse and physical violence.



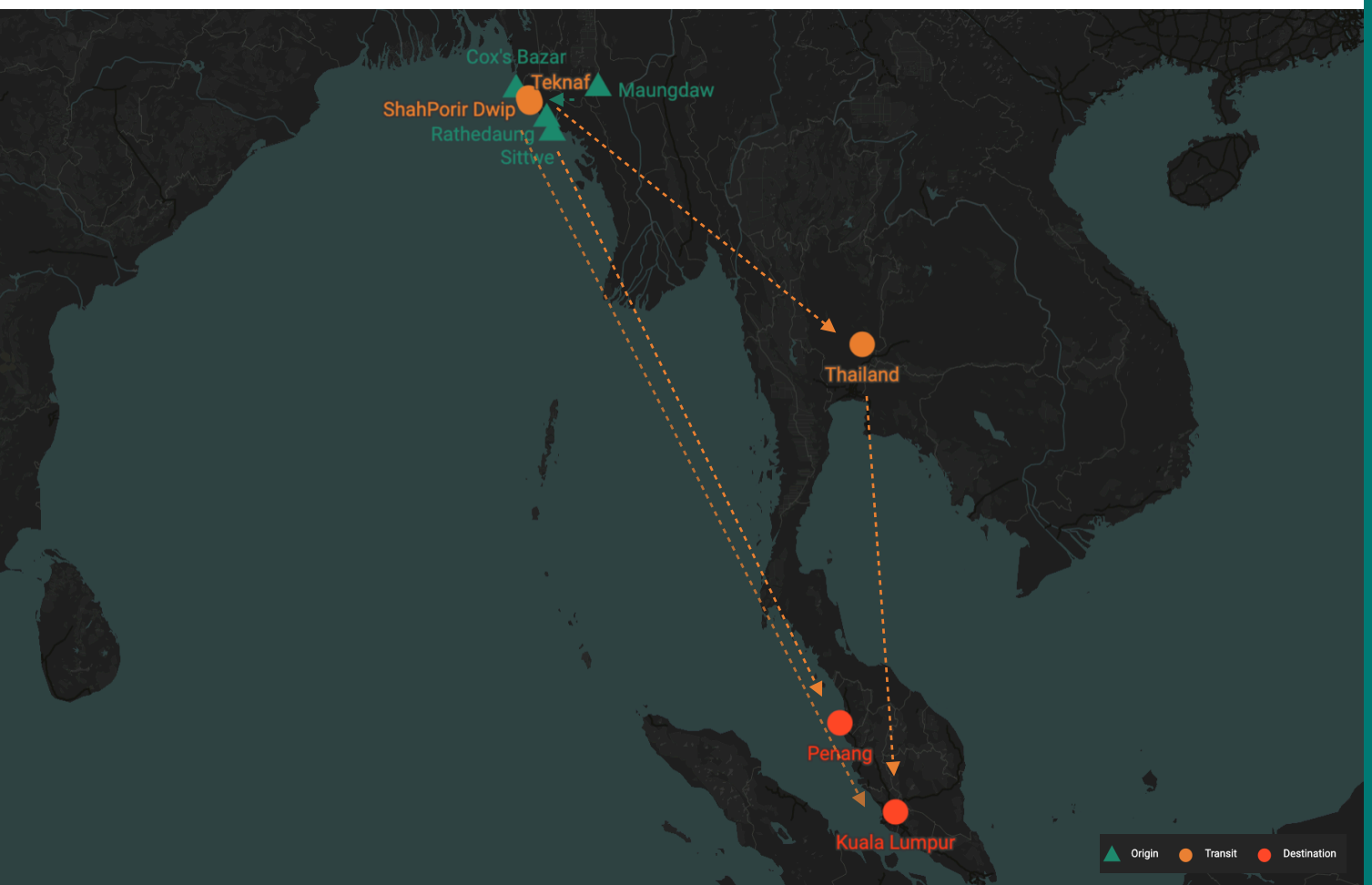
Map 4: Routes relating to India as destination

MYANMAR TO MALAYSIA

Nine submissions were made regarding Rohingya migrants in Malaysia. From Rathedaung, Sittwe and Maungdaw, as well as Cox's Bazar, the migrants travelled via Teknaf and Shah Porir Dwiip Island to Kuala Lumpur and Penang in Malaysia. Thailand was mentioned as a transit location in one of the submissions.

According to the submitted information, the journey to Malaysia took the Rohingya migrants between one and three months by ship, for which they paid between 50,000 and 250,000 Bangladeshi Taka.

In Malaysia, the Rohingya worked in agriculture, construction, and as domestic workers. Marriage by phone is also very common and Rohingya women are often smuggled to Malaysia by boat based on family agreements. Men in Malaysia – often Rohingya who have previously crossed the border themselves – send proposals via relatives and make marriage arrangements by phone, with little or no input from the women and girls themselves.



Map 5: Routes relating to Malaysia as destination

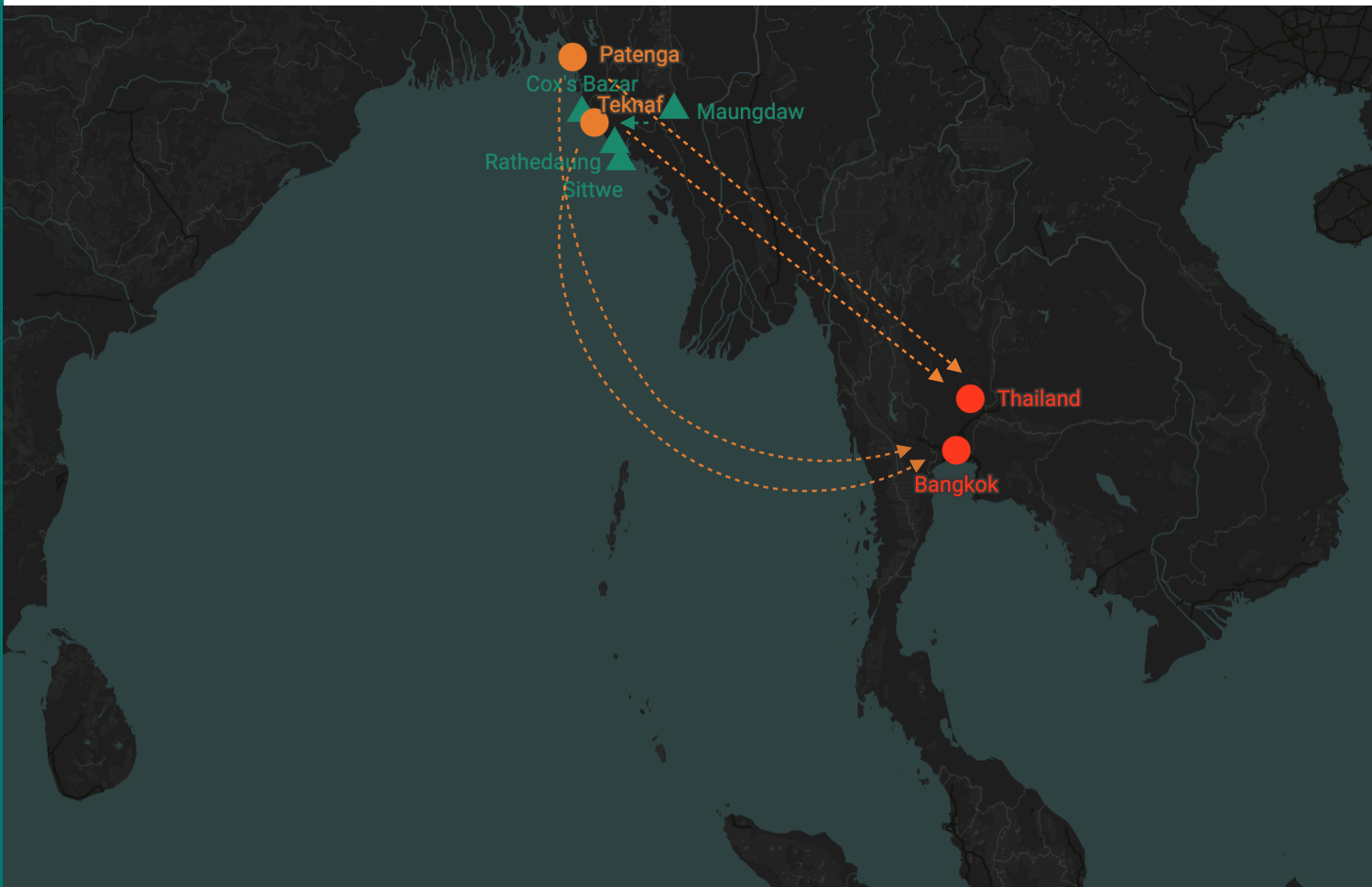
MYANMAR TO THAILAND

Six submissions referenced Thailand as the final destination for Rohingya migrants from Myanmar and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Teknaf and Patenga, two major ports in Bangladesh, were mentioned as transit locations.

In the submitted cases, the journey to Thailand took between one and three months by passenger ship. In all the cases, the Rohingya traveled in a group and paid between 100,000 and 200,000 Bangladeshi Taka to a network of smugglers and facilitators.

In Thailand, the migrants worked in the agriculture, commercial sex, construction and fishing industries, or as domestic workers.

During their journey, and at the final destination, they experienced sexual abuse and physical violence, and were forced to work.

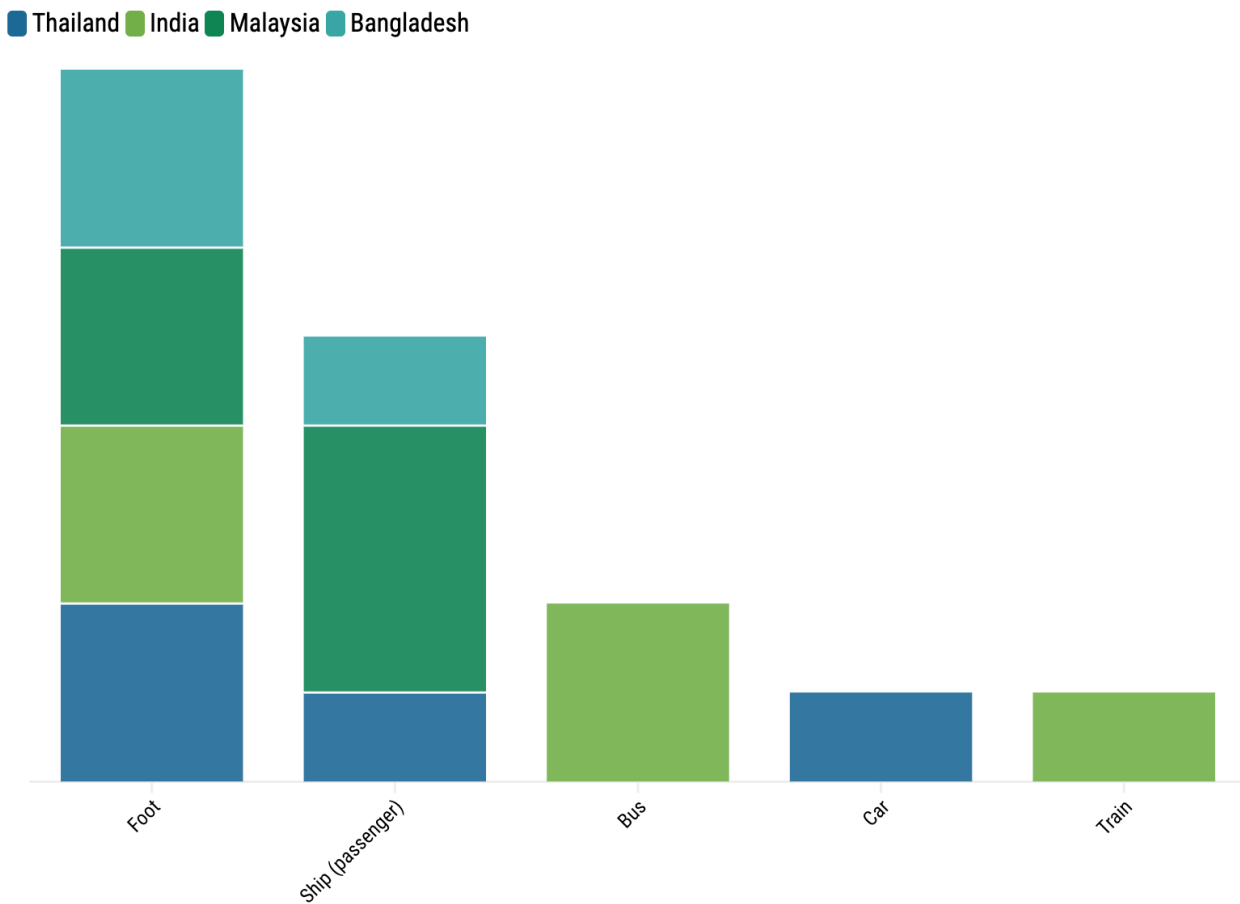


Map 6: Routes relating to Thailand as destination

MODE OF TRANSPORT

In the majority of cases, the migrants traveled first by foot and then by passenger ships and buses. In a small number of cases, migrants were transported in facilitators' cars and by train to reach their destination.

In many cases, migrants used different modes of transport for different legs of the journey. For example, several migrants traveled by foot to Bangladesh and from there by ship to Malaysia and Thailand.



Visualization 1: Modes of transport per destination country

INDUSTRIES OF EXPLOITATION

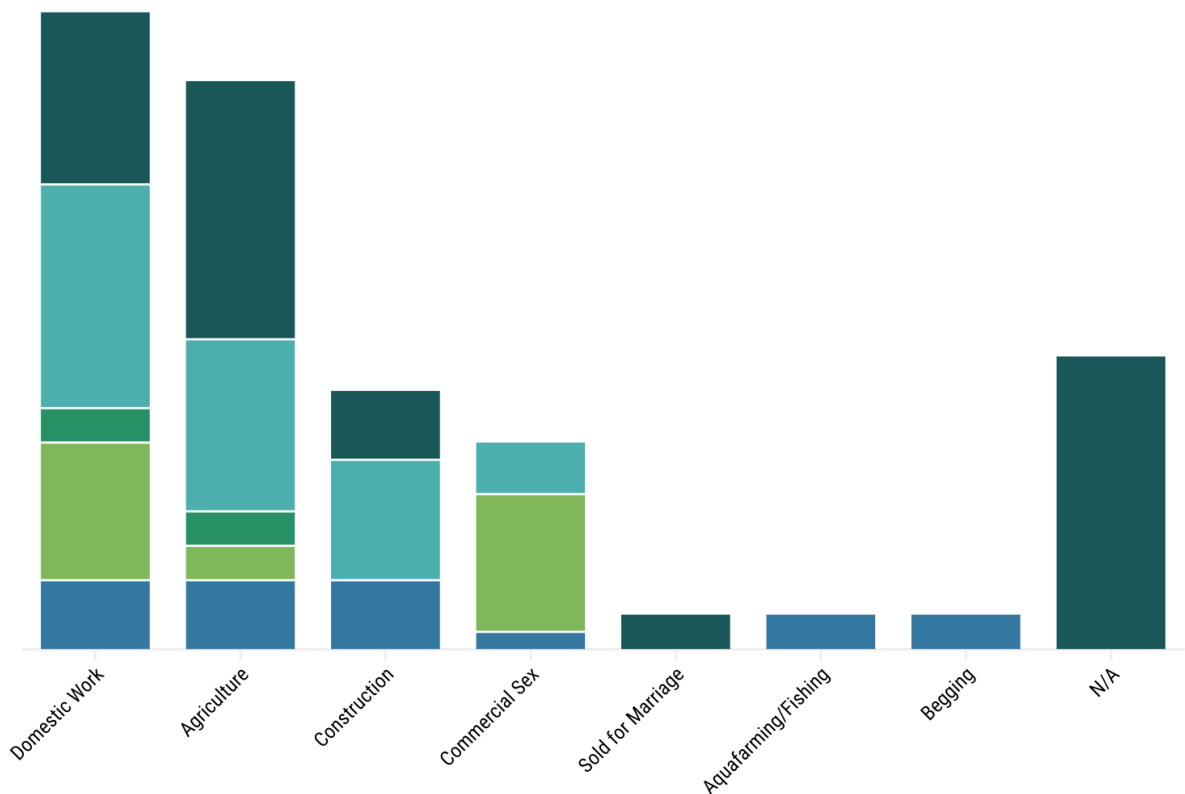
Within the data set, a number of industries of exploitation at the various destinations can be identified. The most referenced industries are domestic work and agriculture, followed by construction and commercial sex.

A few submissions noted cases of migrants being smuggled for arranged marriages, in particular to Malaysia.

Within the data set, seven submissions relate to cases of human trafficking as per the legal definitions, and 36 cases to other types of exploitation, such as forced labour, labour exploitation and domestic servitude.

The graphic below provides an overview of the countries of destination for each of the industries of exploitation.

■ Thailand ■ India ■ Indonesia ■ Malaysia ■ Bangladesh



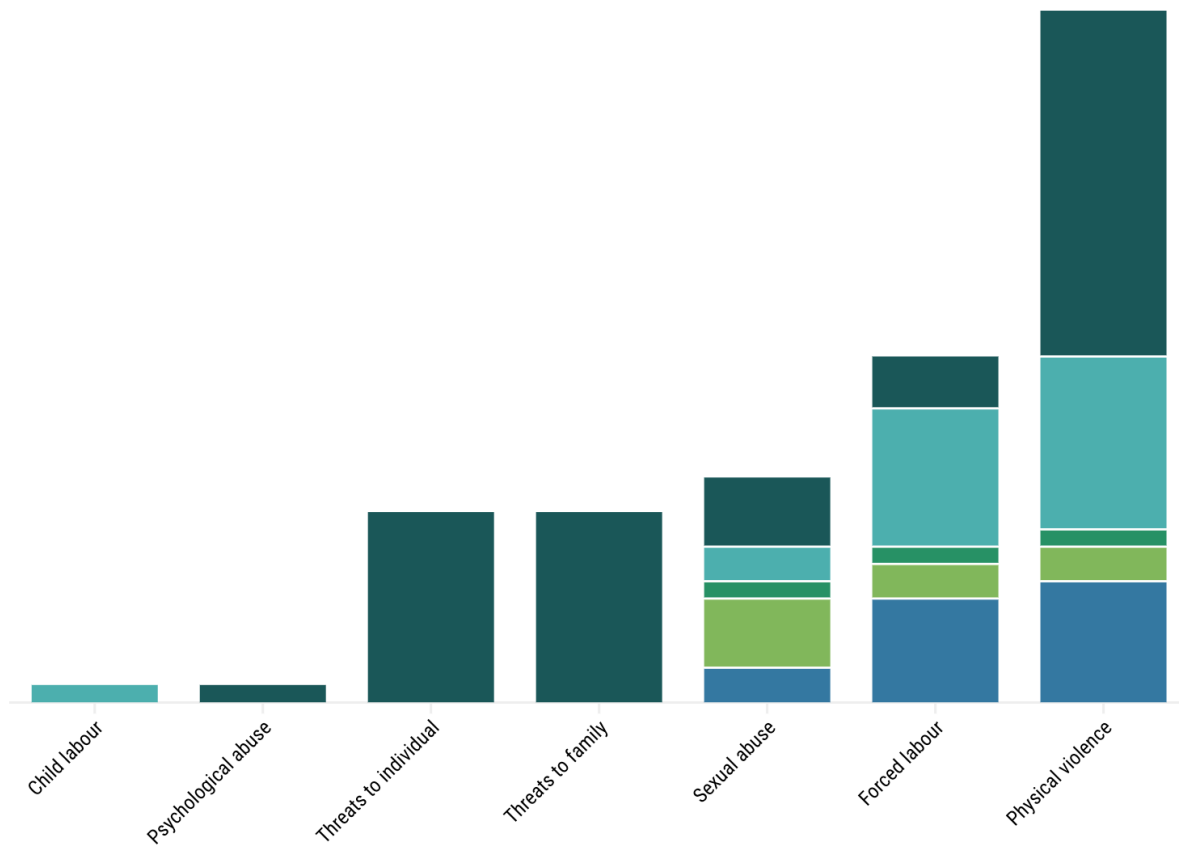
Visualization 2: Industries of exploitation per destination country

FORMS OF ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Rohingya refugees and migrants experience a range of abuses and forms of exploitation during their journeys and at their final destinations.

Within the data set, the most commonly referenced abuse was physical violence, followed by forced labour and sexual abuse. Threats to a person and their family members are also common experiences of Rohingya migrants.

■ Thailand ■ India ■ Indonesia ■ Malaysia ■ Bangladesh



Visualization 3: Forms of abuse and exploitation per destination country

DATA APPLICATIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, this particular data collection has been the most challenging that Freedom Collaborative has supported so far. We are therefore extremely proud of our partners for their efforts and time spent in bringing together some of the data on observed human trafficking and exploitation activity relating to the Rohingya ethnic minority across South and Southeast Asia.

We hope this report will bring further attention to the issue, which has been somewhat overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the military coup in Myanmar.

The report aims to contribute to larger data collection efforts in Southeast Asia and will complement the submissions from civil society organizations in the relevant destination countries, in particular Malaysia.

As noted in Freedom Collaborative reports relating to other countries, the collected data about human trafficking and unsafe migration routes have several potential applications to help guide operational, tactical and strategic decisions made by civil society organizations, law enforcement, the private sector and government.

It is hoped that the data can support stakeholders to:

- Identify at-risk communities and recruitment hotspots in order to better target prevention programming and protection messaging
- Identify civil society and community-based organizations along the identified routes that could provide emergency services
- Identify destination hotspots in order to guide the development of bilateral partnerships and to foster collaboration, so that more robust protection and after-care services can be provided
- Identify critical transit points in order to design more effective monitoring, outreach and intervention programming, and to inform the development of law enforcement/border protection and public-private partnerships (e.g. identifying training needs for airport staff)
- Based on identified critical geographies, collaboratively assess these locations in terms of CSO coverage to avoid duplication of efforts and to help address gaps in areas of high need
- Identify industries at higher risk of involvement with exploitative labour, in order to improve outreach and identification efforts and inform industry engagement

In addition, the report contributes to the improvement of data capture and to sharing and coordination across the region, with the aim of achieving the following outcomes:

- Enhanced sharing of information among civil society groups and with other stakeholders in Bangladesh and Asia
- Decreased duplication of data collection activities and siloed data sets
- An improved overview of relevant actors in the region and available data contributors
- Increased participation and familiarity of Bangladeshi civil society actors with collaborative data collections
- Enhanced understanding of data usage and application for strategic planning and decision making

Freedom Collaborative is the largest community of professionals and other activists working to end human trafficking, forced labour and exploitation globally. It supports collaboration between a wide range of civil society, government, and private sector stakeholders from around the world, through tools and services for data and information sharing. By providing our frontline partners with accessible data collection and analysis tools, Freedom Collaborative brings together data sets on exploitation activity, contextual factors, and the existing response landscape. The team provides anti-trafficking organizations with free support for the development and implementation of data collection that can be adapted to local contexts and implemented quickly.