

Interviews with Refugees and Migrants



Interview#: 5

Name: Ariful Hauq

Age: 25

Country of origin: Bangladesh

Current location: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Names and identified characteristics are changed, but the story is real.
The interview was conducted in 2020.

Hello, I am working with the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC). This interview is to find out about the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants in Kuala Lumpur. If you are from Bangladeshi community residing in Kuala Lumpur, aged 18 or over, and have arrived in Malaysia for less than 2 years, we would like to invite you to participate! If you agree to participate, we will ask questions about your migration journey, working and living condition, security concerns and plans, among other topics. We will use the information collected to report to NGOs and other actors, so that they can develop interventions adapted to the real needs of refugee and migrant communities in Malaysia.



Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and does not provide access to assistance programs or any form of compensation. Our interview will be strictly confidential and anonymous: we will not ask you for personal data during the call.

Many thanks!

How long have you been a migrant in Kuala Lumpur?



It's one year ago since I left Bangladesh to go to Malaysia, and I have lived in Kuala Lumpur for the past seven months. I like it here and have both Malaysian and Bangladeshi friends.



Why do you come to Kuala Lumpur?



It's easy to go to Malaysia and doesn't cost a lot. Traveling from Bangladesh to Malaysia is also simple as there are direct flights. There are plenty of job opportunities in Kuala Lumpur, and many choose to come here on a tourist visa and then stay on to look for work.



Where do you stay and is that a part of the city where other migrants and/or refugees stay?



My home is in central Kuala Lumpur. It's popular with migrants from Bangladesh and other countries as well.



I stay here because it's close to the construction site where my job is. The project will go on for two years, though I'm not sure if I will stay that long.



How would you describe the migration situation here in Kuala Lumpur?



There is a variety of Bangladeshi migrants here. Some are here since long, others just arrived.

Three of my friends went back to Bangladesh. They had no papers or permits and didn't want to risk being arrested.



Do you observe much separation between local residents and migrant communities or between different migrant communities in Kuala Lumpur?

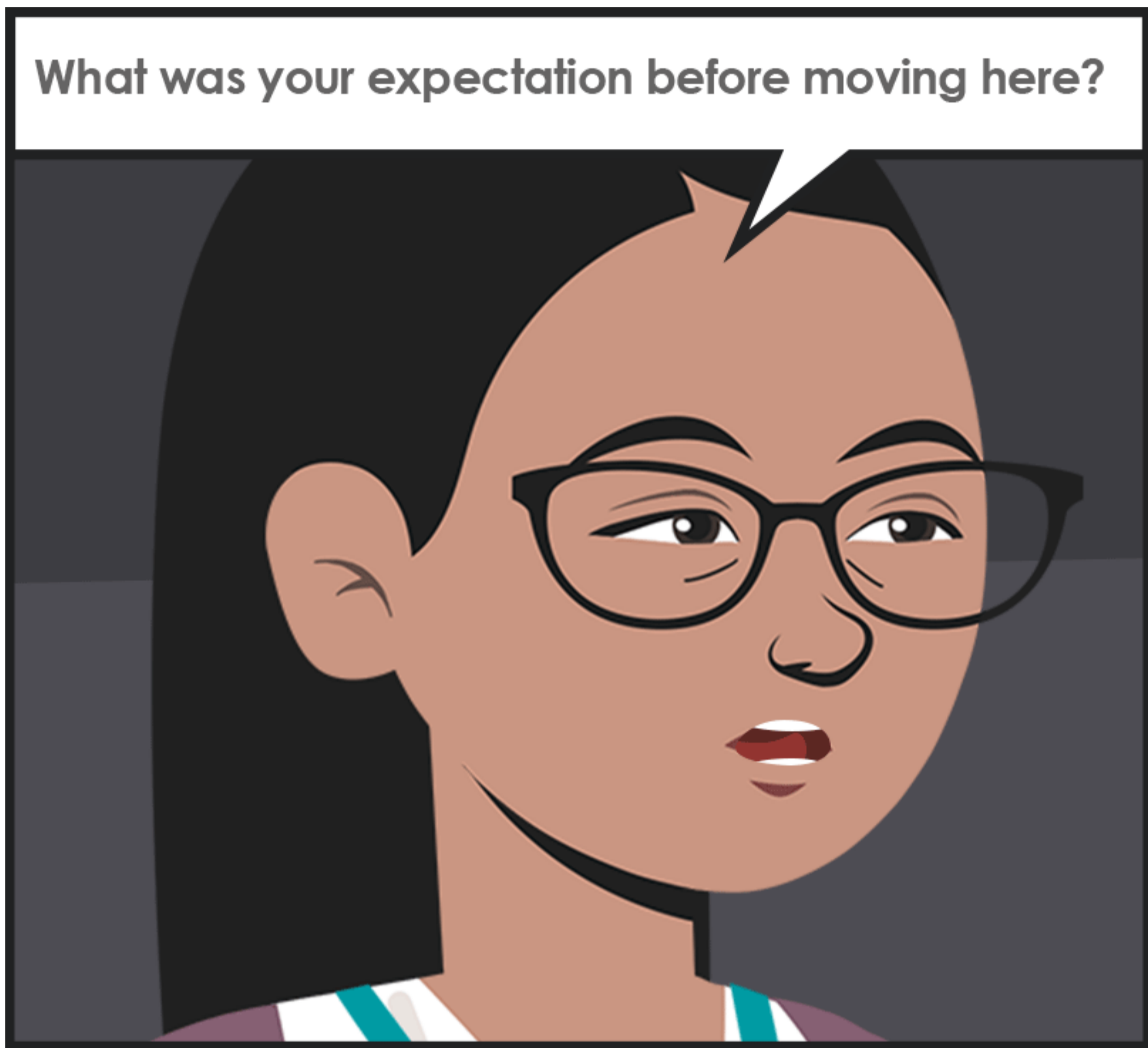


There are instances where local Malaysians and migrants don't interact, especially migrants working in the construction sector.

There is a perception of construction workers being uneducated and poor, and failing to understand the Malaysian culture. So, they tend to see us as strangers that look and dress different from them, and who also don't know how to behave and communicate.



What was your expectation before moving here?



Before I came here, I expected that this would be an opportunity to earn a living and save some money, too. My plan was to find a good place to live and work. Now, I'm so stressed because of Covid - 19. Still, compared to my hometown, I make more money here in Kuala Lumpur.



What are the good things about this city that make you want to stay?



The lifestyle here is so different. Everything is accessible and you can find anything nearby. But it's different if you don't have a job. I used to see Kuala Lumpur as my second home.



But now I don't, ever since everyday life and living has become difficult. It has become risky to stay in Kuala Lumpur, though migrants can still get work easily. That's why many are staying.

Do you have documents that allow you to stay in this city?



I used to have documents, but now they are expired. That has changed a lot for me. Since I don't have any papers, my employer holds back my salary for longer. I'm forced to work harder and can't complain. I also don't have a contract.



Three months ago, the Government of Malaysia offered migrants in the country an opportunity to renew expired documents. But I had to work and couldn't make it. Now, this chance is gone and I have no way to apply for papers.



What are some concerns you have recently?



I experience discrimination at work. Local Malaysians sometimes harass us and force us to quit our jobs. It has happened a few times.



Do you think that Covid-19 has made Kuala Lumpur a more risky place for refugees and migrants in terms of protection threats or access to livelihoods?



Covid - 19 certainly makes it dangerous to live in Kuala Lumpur. I can't only stay at work and not go anywhere else. To buy something, I need to ask friends who have permits to shop for me.

My employer also makes me work harder. And I can't go to the public hospitals or clinics for a health check-up as they will ask for documents, like my passport or visa.



Things are becoming more and more expensive as well. But in the end, I really don't have any choice but to stay here.

Do you know anyone from your community who was arrested, detained or deported from Kuala Lumpur?



Two of my friends were arrested by Immigration officials and the police. One of them spent 28 days in a detention center, and was there for two months, before being deported to Bangladesh.



Can you tell us of any particular events during your time in this city, positive or negative?



I do have a bad experience from my time at a construction site here. We worked the whole day, and some local Malaysians treated me badly. My employer, a Malaysian, kept my salary and then forced me to resign. It could happen again and there is nothing I can do since I'm here without papers and permits. It keeps me from taking any action and I don't know who could help me.



But I also had good experiences. That was the company I worked with earlier on. The management treated me well. They gave me food and allowances and even days off. My boss told me that since I didn't have documents and couldn't go out much, he brought me different things and tried to keep us all happy.

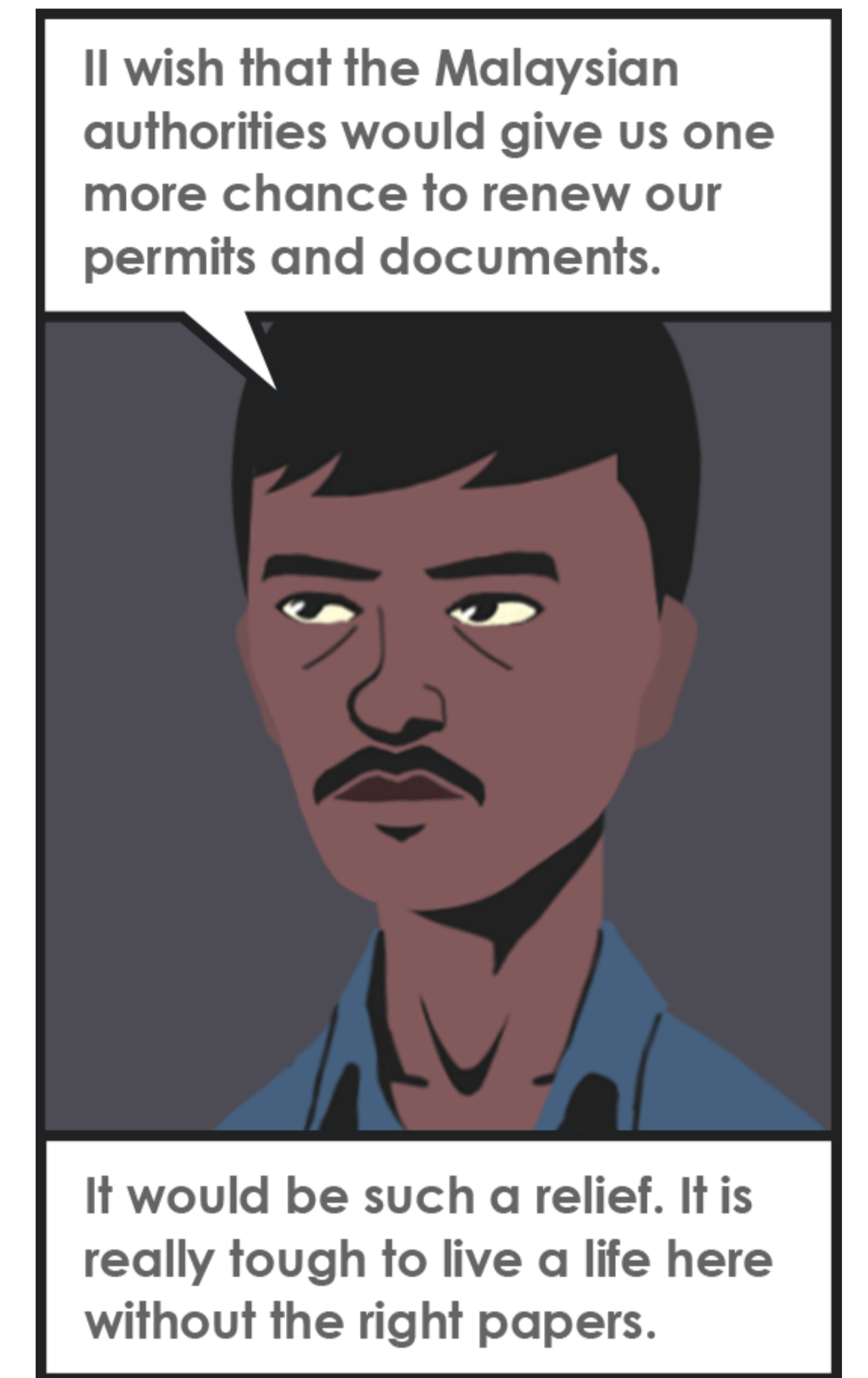


Do you receive any assistance from your community here?



I have some friends here. If I have a problem, I will ask them for help.





End of the interview

DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL



Funded by:



**MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**