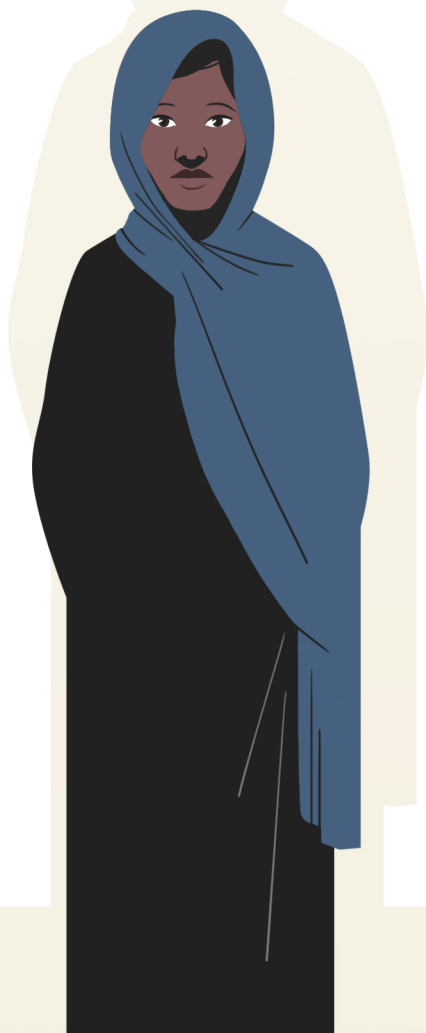


# Interviews with Refugees and Migrants



**Interview#: 8**

**Name: Gulbahar**

**Age: 30**

**Country of origin: Myanmar (Rohingya)**

**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 Rohingya refugees in Kuala Lumpur. If you are from Rohingya 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.

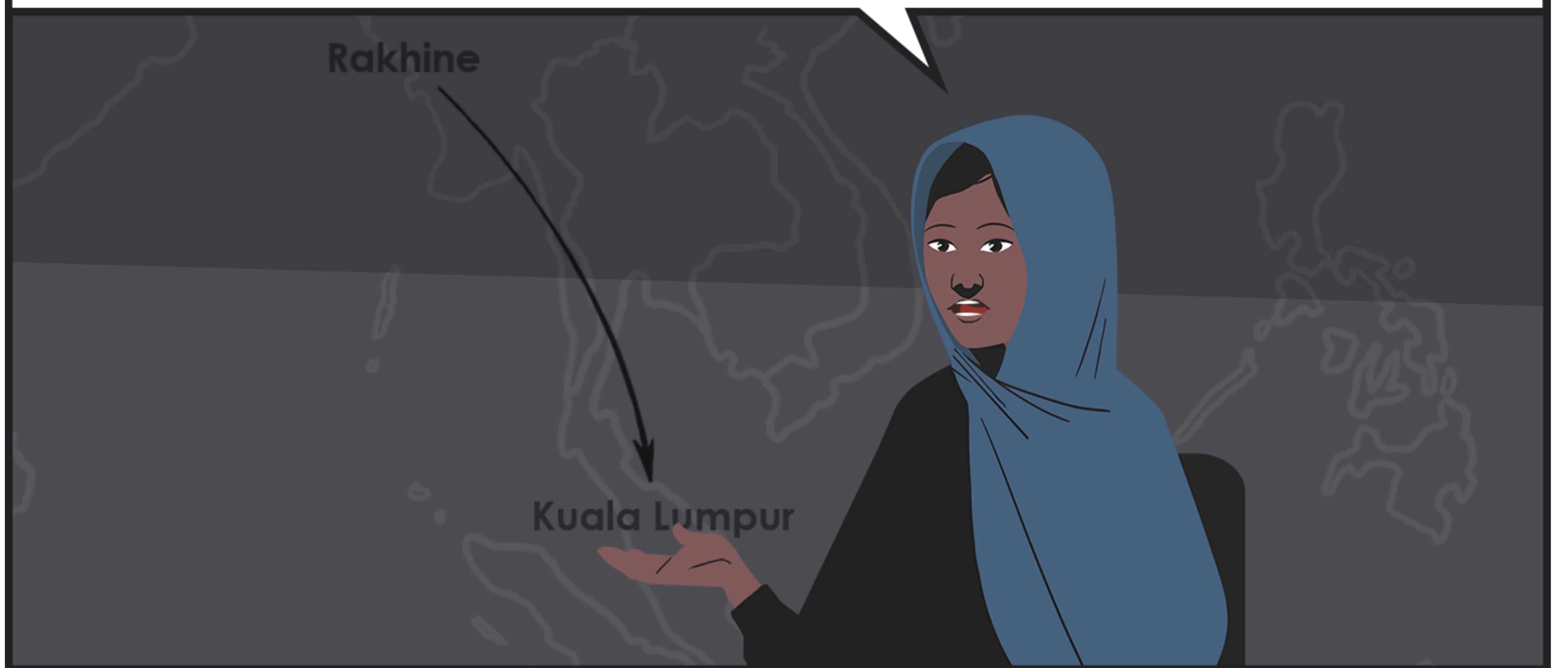


Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and does not provide access to assistance programs or any form of compensation. Our interview will be strictly confidential and anonymous: we will not ask you for personal data during the call.  
  
Many thanks!

How long have you been a refugee/migrant in Kuala Lumpur?



I arrived in Malaysia one and a half years ago and have lived in Kuala Lumpur for eight months. I left Rakhine state in Myanmar because of persecution, killings and oppression.



How did you travel to Malaysia? Was the journey difficult?



It was by boat, and it was dangerous, but I survived. There are stories of people who died on the way here.



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

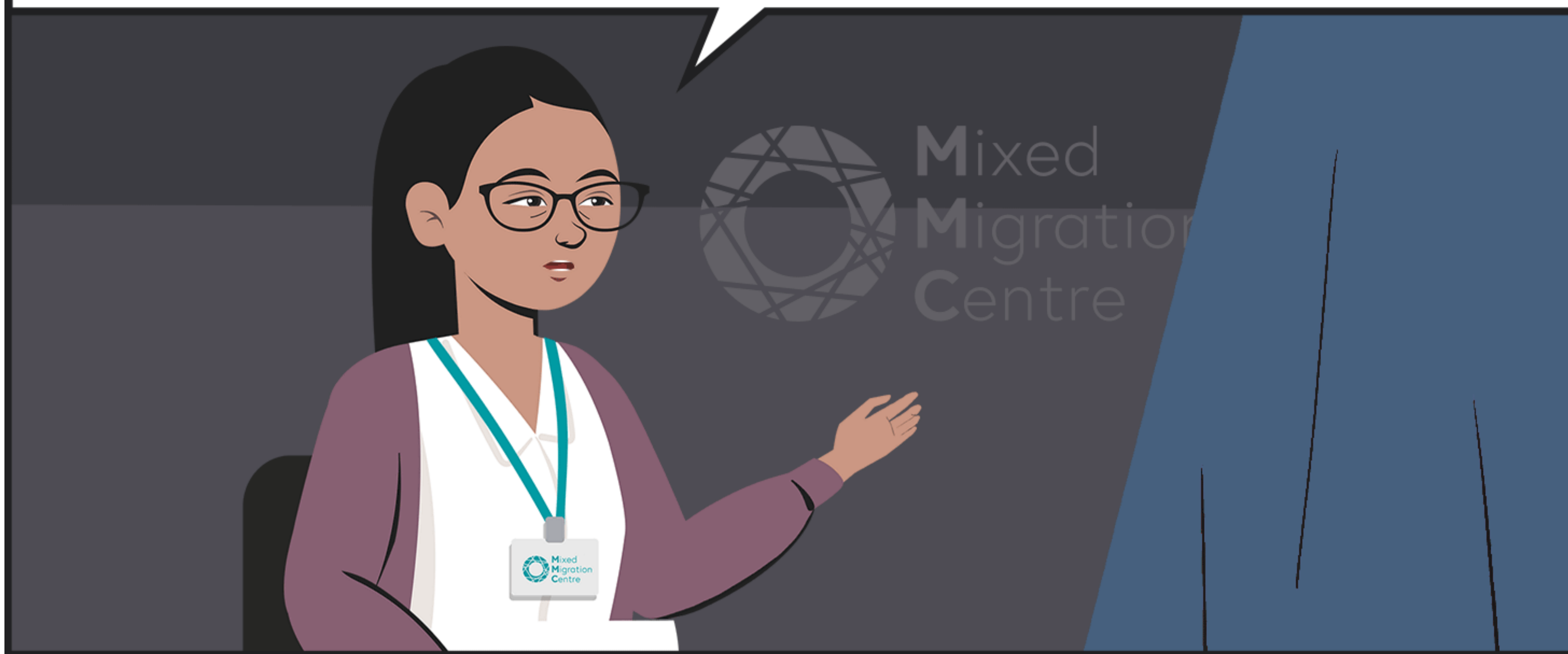


In my area, there are a lot of people from the Rohingya community and other migrant communities as well. But because of language barriers, people live separately.



We have no relatives here, but I made friends within our community. Most of them are quite new. We had some old friends, but many moved to different countries, like the USA, New Zealand, and Canada.

Do you observe much separation between residents and migrant communities or between different migrant communities? Or, are people all mixed in neighborhoods?



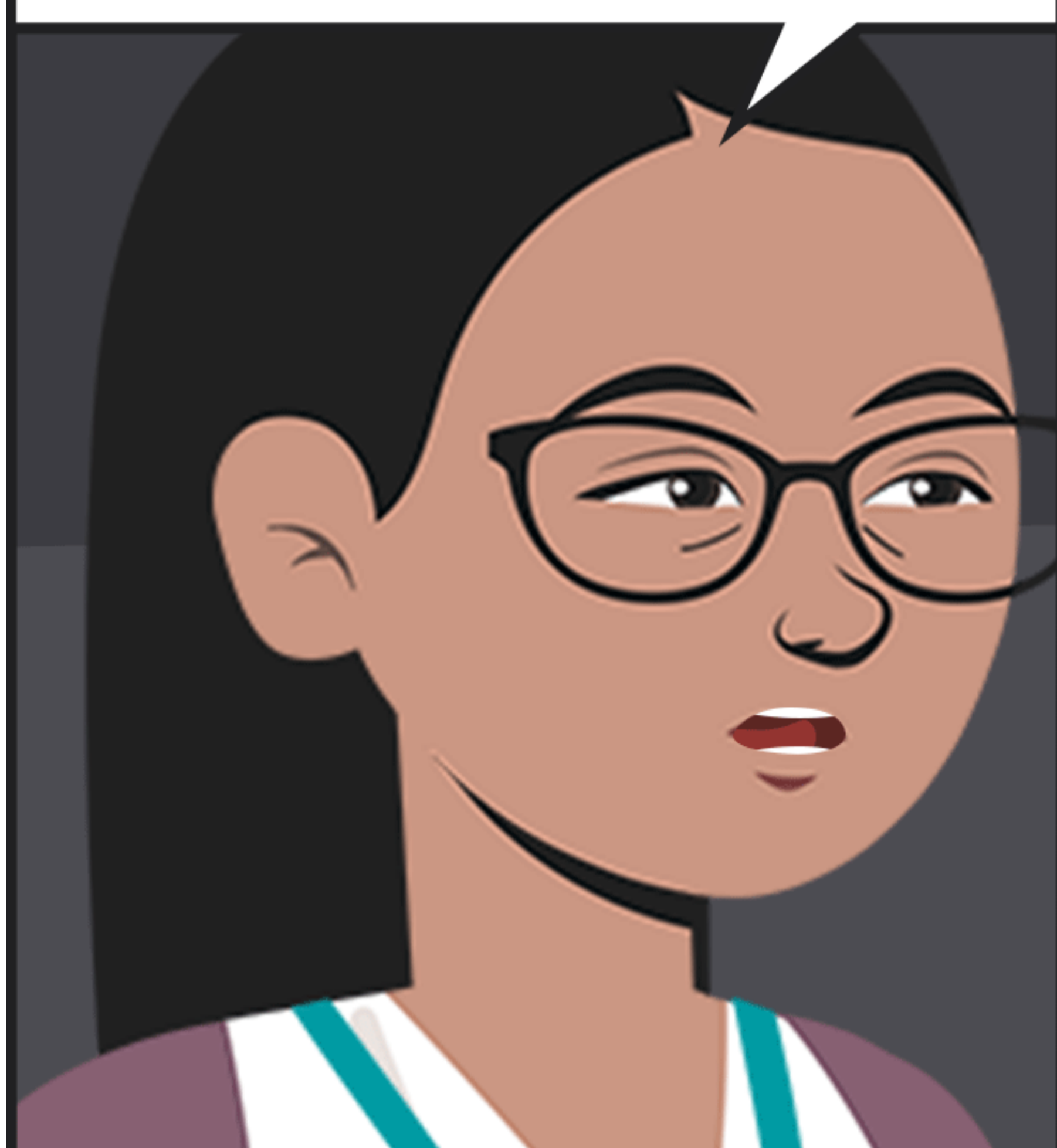
My husband speaks a bit of Malay, so he can communicate with Malaysian people.



Often, my husband goes out to different places, and sometimes he takes me with him. Some people spoke to us, but there are also people who don't want to talk to us. Before Covid-19, it was mostly ok. But now, people don't want to get near us anymore.



Why did you come to Kuala Lumpur? What was your expectation before moving here?

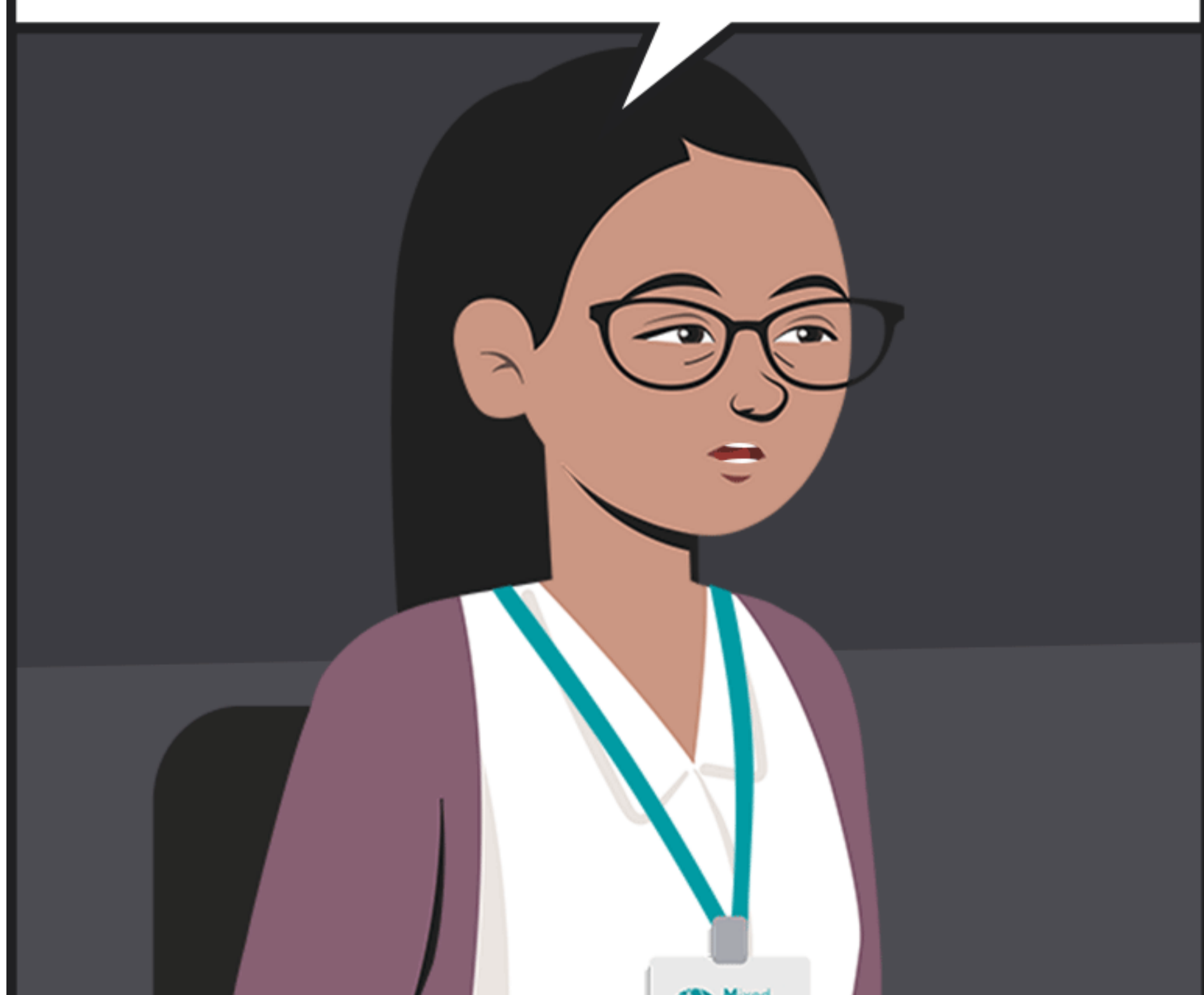


I left my country because of oppression and persecution. I came to Malaysia expecting a better life and more safety than in Rakhine, Myanmar. I had expected things to be better than what they are now. When I first moved to Kuala Lumpur, it was ok.



However, after two months in Kuala Lumpur, the pandemic started, and everything became difficult. Since Covid-19, I don't want to stay here anymore. But we are still waiting to see if we can be resettled to another country, so I will continue live here and try to find a job.

What kind of work would you like to do?



Rohingya women mostly stay at home because their husbands prefer their wives not to work. I don't have any skills, but I can do cleaning and cooking, some domestic work, so I would like to work.



I know of women who are working, but they are not that close to me. Some are working at the UNHCR office, some are doing domestic work.

What makes Kuala Lumpur an attractive destination for refugees and migrants?



Kuala Lumpur is a beautiful place, with many tourists. My husband has job opportunities here. Another reason is that the UNHCR office is based in Kuala Lumpur, so it's easier for us to get the UNHCR card because we can approach their staff. I also got the UNHCR card.



Kuala Lumpur has many good things to offer, but we struggle to live and survive here. There are many interesting places, like city centers, conference centers, and it makes us happy to visit them. I can't think of any particularly bad memory.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, do you think Kuala Lumpur has become a riskier place for refugees and migrants, in terms of protection threats or reduced access to livelihoods?



I have my husband and two kids. Before, it was ok as my husband was working. Since Covid-19, my family faces financial hardship. My husband was providing cleaning services, but now he has no job.



Covid-19 means that we can't leave our place. My family and my friends can't even go to the market for shopping.

Do you know any member of your community that was arrested, detained or deported in Kuala Lumpur? What is their current situation?



Some friends of mine were caught by the police here. They are now jailed in detention centers, some stayed there for six months. After the detention, they will hopefully be released without any risk of deportation.



What are some concerns you have recently?



The most worrying time is after Covid-19. My husband could not work, people cannot go out of the house, some got sick with Covid, and so I'm worried.



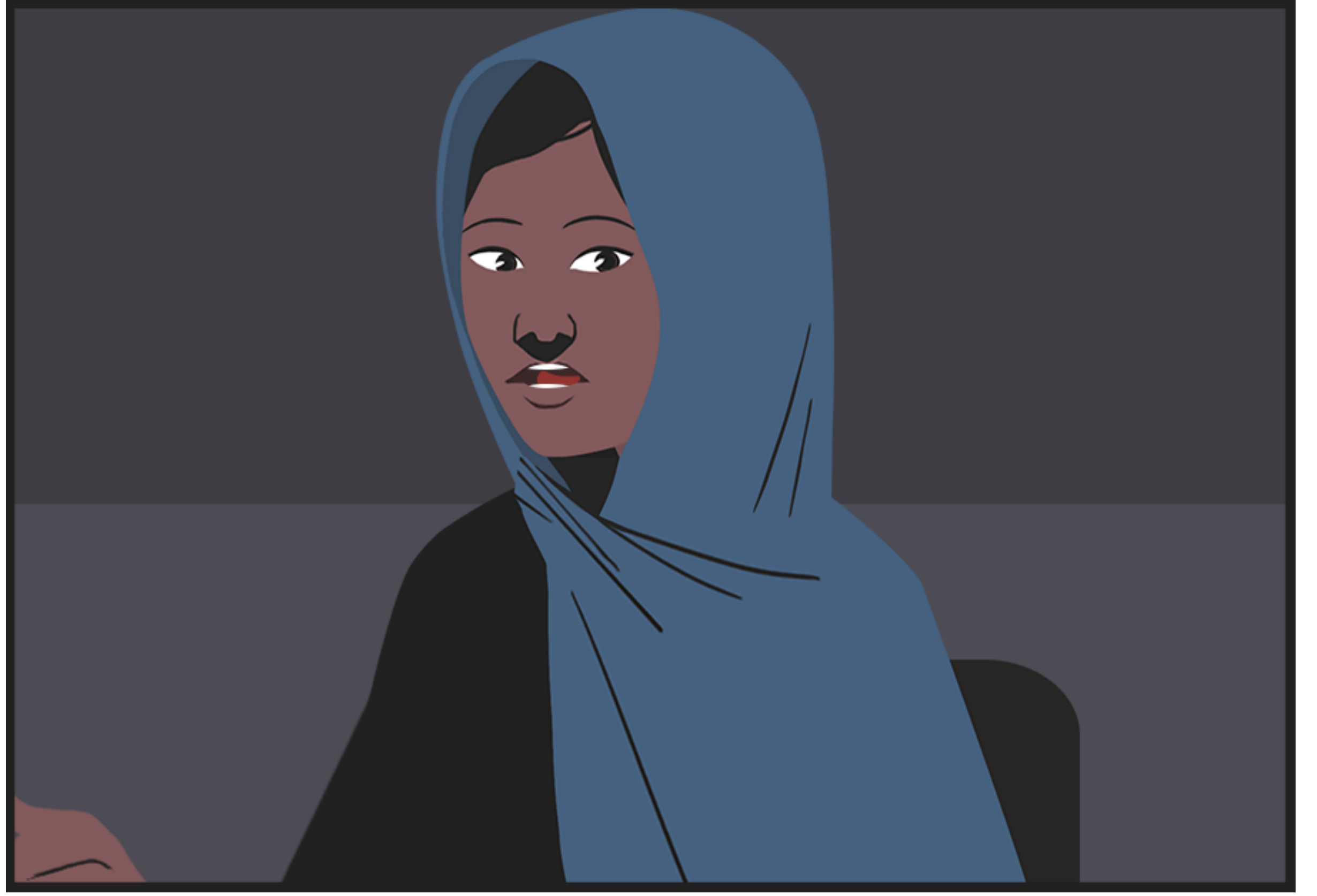
I also heard about the hate campaigns against us. It made me feel depressed.



We already faced xenophobia and discrimination in Rakhine state in Myanmar and that's why we left our country. We expected it to be better here, but many local Malaysians don't accept migrants, especially Rohingya people.



Now we can't even work and we feel discriminated against. I really hope to be resettled to a better place where this kind of discrimination will not happen again.



Have you received any assistance since the outbreak?



Since Covid-19, I received some food package from NGOs, but not from our own community, as most of us face a similar situation.



Do you have any final comments/ stories to share?



I hope to be able to make some savings so that my family can cope with the financial hardship, and we can go out to beautiful places in Kuala Lumpur again.



End of the interview

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