

Interviews with Refugees and Migrants



Interview#: 4

Name: Hasina

Age: 25

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.



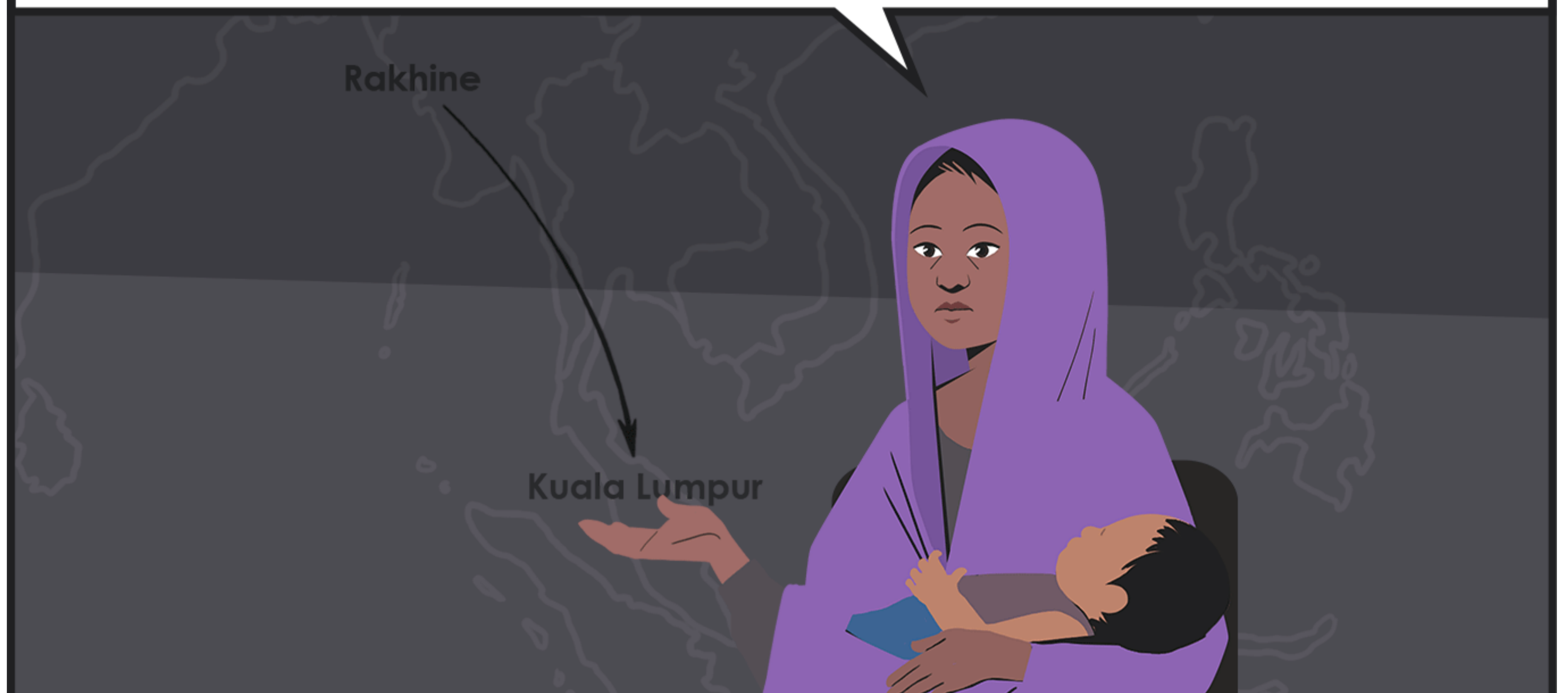
Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and does not provide access to assistance programs or any form of compensation. Our interview will be strictly confidential and anonymous: we will not ask you for personal data during the call.

Many thanks!

How long have you been a refugee/migrant in this city, when did you arrive and where did you come from?



I have lived in Kuala Lumpur for a year and a half and came from Rakhine in Myanmar to reunite with my husband who was already here. We had a baby a year ago.



Did you come alone or with others? When you came did you come with a smuggler or did a smuggler organise your travel from your home country, or did you do it alone or another way?



I set off on my own and met some people from my village on the way who were also going to Malaysia.

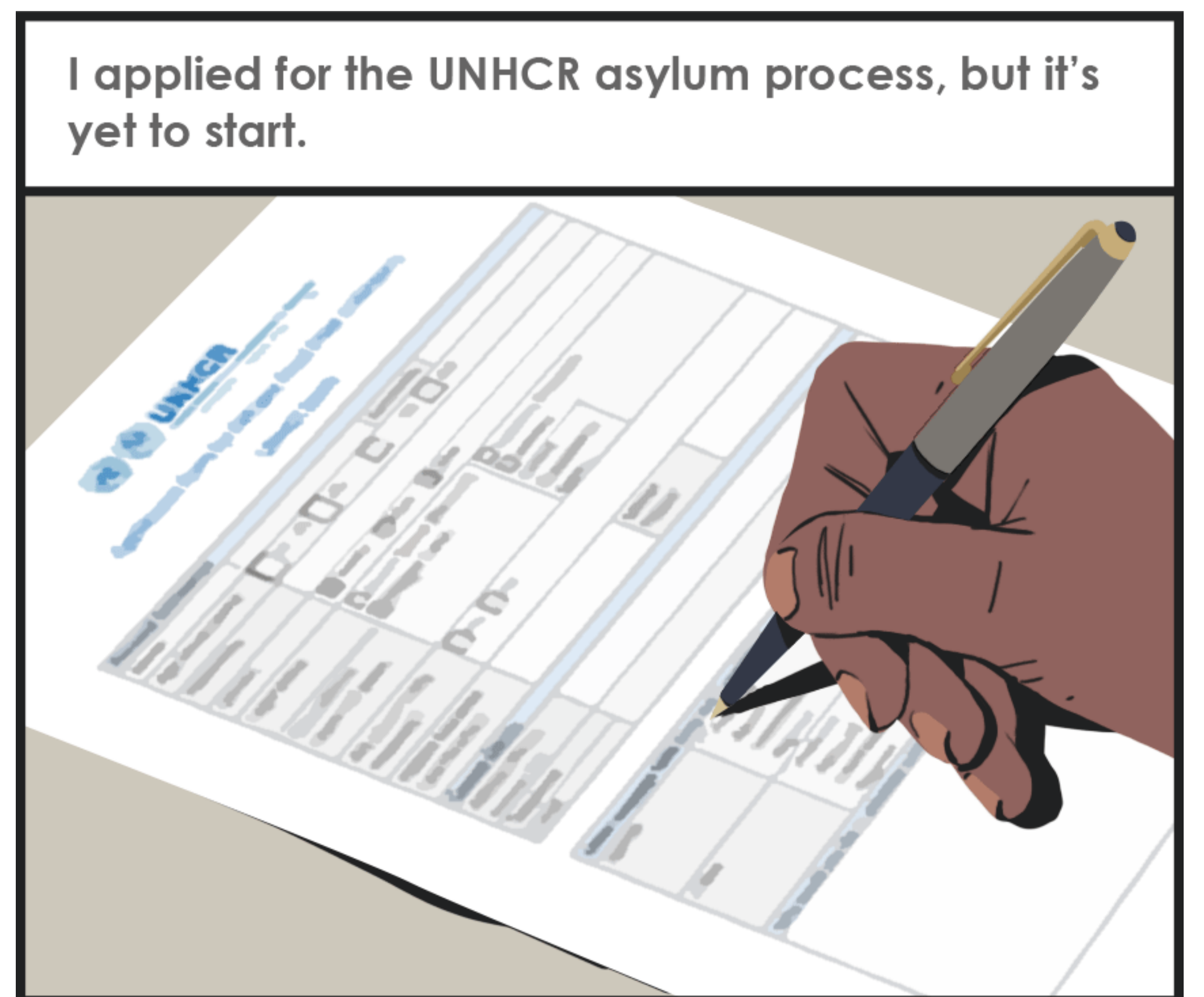
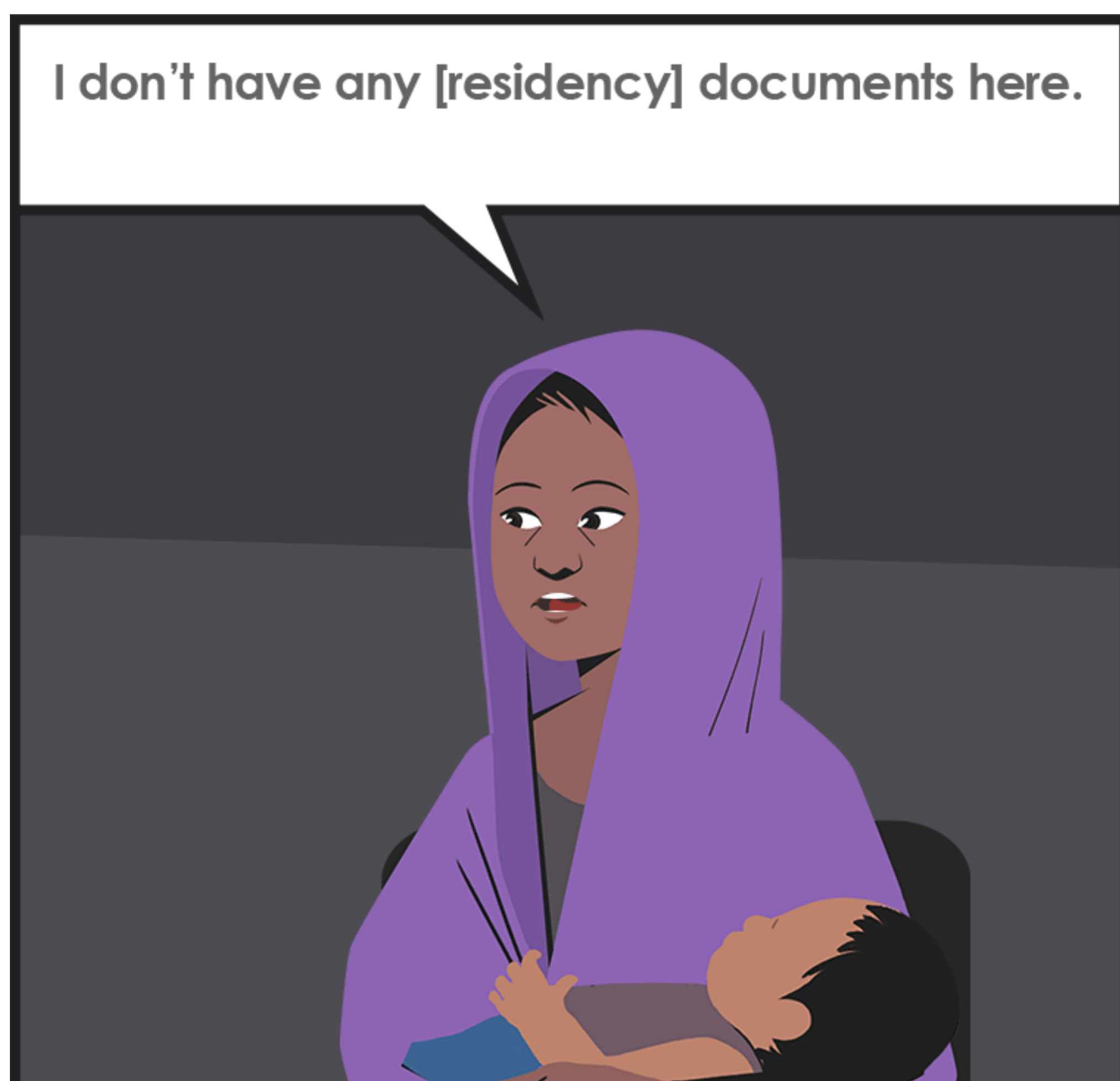
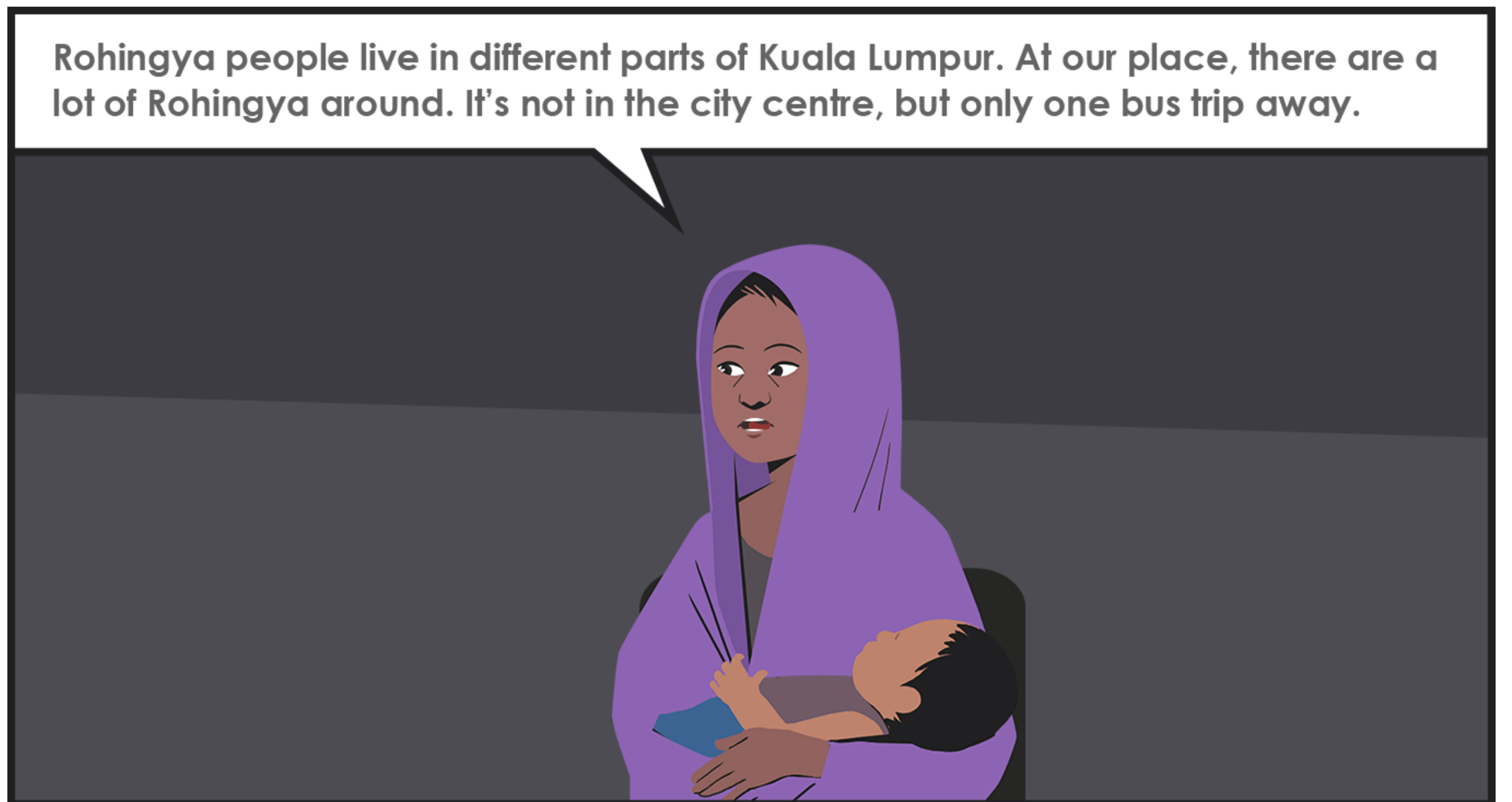


We travelled together. We went to Thailand by boat, then to Malaysia, and finally to Kuala Lumpur by bus. We paid smugglers to take us on what turned out to be a difficult journey. Everyone had to pay 7,000 Malaysia ringgits (USD 1,700) before the journey.



Then, on the way, we were all kept at a camp from where the smugglers called our family members back home asking for more money.





Do you observe any change in the attitude of local people here towards migrants since the COVID-19 crisis began? How was it like before?



I haven't experienced any discrimination. If I go to a clinic for a check-up, there will be an interpreter. Neither in the markets do we face discrimination.



But I've heard that since COVID-19, there are people asking us to go home because they hate Rohingya.

Do you feel the city makes it easy for you to be 'part of the city, or do you feel a bit on the outside of the city's life?



When I first arrived in Kuala Lumpur, it was scary with so many new people. But it's different now and I have less fear.



Kuala Lumpur has become my second home and is better than my home country. I can live here more freely, eat whatever I want, and take care of my baby. There are less medical barriers, and clinics are there if we need them. Kuala Lumpur is such a nice place with a city lifestyle and so much to buy. In Rakhine, Rohingya are persecuted, face harassment and are generally unsafe.



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



I know two people who got arrested who are still in detention centres. My husband fears being arrested and never goes out, even for work.



He has no documentation, like a work or residence permit. Policemen are everywhere in the markets and shops.

Do you have any friends/ family members from your home country that are planning to come to KL?

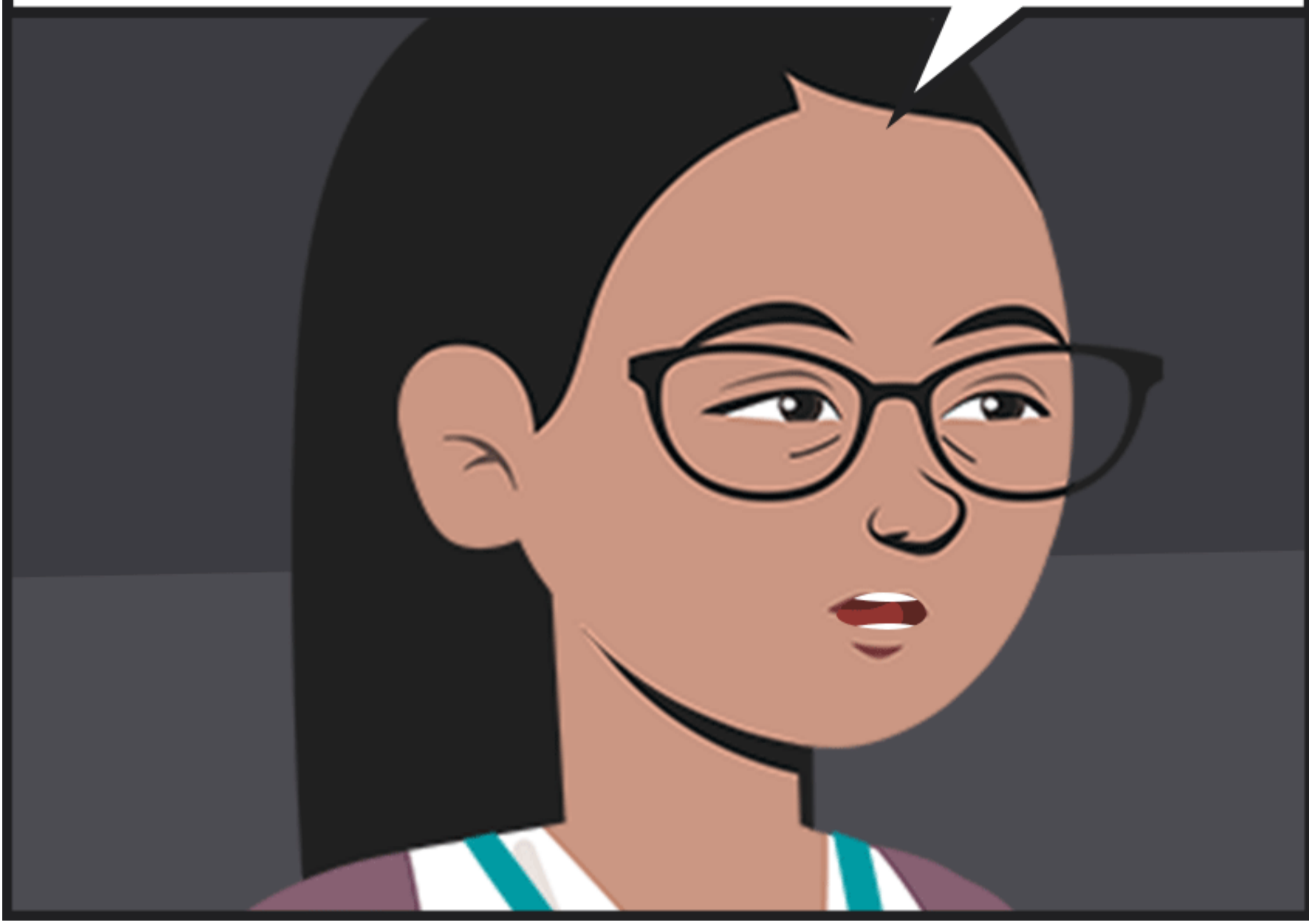


We have friends and relatives from Rakhine who want to move here as well. Earlier on, I thought of bringing my family here, because at that time, nothing happened to us.



But now I am not willing to bring them here anymore since many local people are not happy with us. The smuggling costs are higher too.

Have you benefitted from assistance to survive in this city or do you survive without help or assistance?



Since the start of Covid19-, I received some food packages from many NGOs, but they are not enough for my whole family. Sometimes we need milk powder for the baby.



How do your community support each other?



We did not get support from other community members. They all have their own family and they have to care about their own family.



Other migrant communities are living separately from Rohingya people here.

Can you tell us of any event(s) that occurred during your time in this city that were positive and impressed you?



And also any that were negative?

Since COVID-19, I have faced many difficulties. I have no money, I have 1 child, my husband lost his job. We cannot go out for fear of arrest.



All family members have to stay in their houses with no food and no milk powder. My baby cries a lot.

Do you have some dreams of what you would like to do in this city that you can share?



I have two dreams...



First, I want my children to get an education. Refugee children in Malaysia cannot go to the government's schools, they can only study in community schools with not good education.



Second, I hope there would be no more arrests, so that people can live freely here.

Do you still have an intention to go on somewhere else or perhaps return home?



We have no intention of moving to another place. My husband speaks a bit of Malay so we may just stay here. I sometimes dream of going back to Rakhine state when the situation gets better.



Only if there is no more killing, no persecution, no displacement, and only if I could live like other ethnic groups in Myanmar, I would like to go back.

 Please move your mouse on the frames to interact!



End of the interview

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