DECEMBER 2019

EDUCATION FOR ROHINGYA REFUGEE AND SLUM DWELLING CHILDREN IN BANGLADESH

COMPILED BY S. RUDRA & S. M TANVIR - MUKTI
E SMITHERAM, J. LITTLETON & G. DRIVER - CHILDREN ON THE EDGE
THREE MONTH SNAPSHOT

8,900 REFUGEE & SLUM DWELLING CHILDREN RECEIVED EDUCATION

5,887 PARENTS ATTENDED TEACHER - PARENT FORUMS

178 TEACHERS REPORTED FEELING EQUIPPED & SUPPORTED

100% PCE EXAM PASS RATES FOR COMMUNITY CHILDREN

1,000 CHILDREN RECEIVED & DECORATED NEW DESKS

5 DIGITAL NEWSLETTERS PRODUCED & PUBLISHED

OVER 55,000 INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES

1,000 CHILDREN RECEIVED HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS

900 CHILDREN TOOK PART IN ANNUAL SPORTS DAY AND PICNIC

“We make it more fun by doing acting, singing, dancing and games.”

KAMRUNNAHAR - TEACHER IN KUTUPALONG
CHALLENGES IN THE CAMP

Following the well-publicised failure of the voluntary repatriation of 3,000 Rohingya refugees in August 2019, the Government of Bangladesh started putting pressure on organisations that work with the Rohingya and the refugees themselves. As part of this, the government suspended 42 NGO programmes for audit and review. This included Muki’s programmes, resulting in the suspension of our camp schools for the review process over two months (October and November 2019).

The programme passed every level of the audit and review, and re-opened in late November. Consequently, the main challenges over this quarter have been around mitigating the disruption of our camp schools and succeeding in the negotiations required to regain government approval.

The closures impacted our ability to produce expected outputs and the camp children’s ability to progress. It also led to our attendance figures reducing, although the lowest recorded was 60%, which is still relatively high given the situation and context.

The changing tides of politics can always impact programming in ways that cannot be anticipated. During this quarter, we learned that even supporting the right of Rohingya children to receive a meaningful education can be portrayed as controversial. While our programme passed all levels of inspection from authorities, that was of little comfort to thousands of our students who were forced to stay at home.

Going forward we are taking a deliberate approach to protect the programme from further potential disruptions. Programme leadership reports regularly to the District Commissioner, who holds sway over which NGO programmes the government reviews. Additionally, the head of the District Chamber of Commerce has been brought onboard in an advisory role; with his affiliation also providing another layer of assurance that activities will remain uninterrupted in the future.

Teachers and Project Officers have been working hard to get the camp children back onto their previous trajectory, and the introduction of digital technology has proven a strong pull back to the classroom and an effective means of ensuring real learning.
Despite the challenges of this quarter, the ‘Moja Kids’ platform has been coming on in leaps and bounds. This concept has evolved from the original printed newsletter activity in each area, into a digital platform where the children record and share news updates in a video format.

There have now been five child-led video newsletters produced by a mix of community, camp and enclave schools. Significantly, refugee pupils can now interact with children outside the Kutupalong camp, connecting and learning about each other’s lives.

Children in all three areas are connecting with each other to showcase their talents, achievements and learning. Videos have been published on YouTube and will soon be available on a new web platform, which will invite further contributions from other suitable projects in different countries.

The aim is that this platform will become a global online community for children to express their ideas and talents, connecting and communicating beyond the confines of their challenging surroundings.

**MEET RAAJ**

Somorjit Das Raju is one of 10 project officers in Kutupalong. It was his idea for the children to decorate their new desks with colourful paintings.

He says, “Children like things to be colourful, so this is a fun way for them to learn and enjoy being at school. They all helped paint the desks and they are really happy with them.”
CHILD COUNCILS

During the camp school closures, Child Council attendees dropped from 863 in July to 417 in September, but numbers were already recovering by December with 620 attending. Over the last six months, Child Councils have been working on cleaning areas around the centres, encouraging attendance, supporting weaker students, discussing how to balance school and Madrasa, decorating classrooms, caring for garden areas and planting new trees that will provide shade and shelter from rain.

Council members have all expressed enthusiasm about the move from print to video newsletters. They have been communicating to their respective classes about the change and were tasked with identifying new talent and ideas among their peers. They have also been practicing presenting to the camera and looking after the digital equipment. With the popularity of Child Councils and the children’s delight at seeing the results of their work, we are confident that Council attendance figures will return to their pre-school-closure levels.

EXAM SUCCESS

Following the community and enclave schools’ success in April’s Primary School Certificate Exams (98.7% pass rate), their results were exceeded in December, with a pass rate of 99.8% (99.9% in enclave schools) on their Annual exams.

Grade five students in the communities also took a test exam in October to practice for the final PEC exam with a pass rate of 99.4. 111 students then took the final exam in November with a 100% pass rate.

In the camps, the Education Sector decided to roll out a Learners Assessment before the end of the year, which we carried out from the 21st-22nd December.

Despite the two month embargo, the team in Kutupalong managed to enable over 70% of children to sit the assessment, resulting in an impressive 84% passing the assessment and being promoted to the next level.

“The Child Council members are very curious about the digital newsletters and delighted to see them on screen. All of them want to participate and find new ideas and talent.”

Sudeb Rudra - Project Manager for Enclave & Community Schools
A WORD FROM SAFA’S MUM AND DAD

“We are very proud of our daughter since she has got the opportunity of studying at the Children on the Edge and Mukti School. The school is very clean and besides study materials, she gets safe drinking water, medicine, high energy biscuits, toys, and other facilities. We are so happy about this. She loves her teachers because they make sure she is safe and teach her with care. In Myanmar when we had to flee to Bangladesh, we never thought that our girl would get such quality education here.

We thank the Almighty Creator for helping Safa recover from all the shocks she has gone through in the past. This is happening because she is having a happy and busy time at school. She learned a lot here like drawing, counting and playing. Moreover, she has made friends in school and plays with them in the camp during the holiday time.”
Children are increasingly hopeful for their future, with 78% of those interviewed in July and 87% in December thinking it is likely or very likely they will be able to get a job in their chosen career.

Encouragingly, those feeling it was not likely at all they would find employment in their chosen field dropped from 16% to 2%, and that was largely in the camp.

It seems from the December child interviews and quarterly reports that the new digital learning and digital video production is inspiring children and giving them confidence that they will be able to compete in the job market of a globalised world.

As these learning methods have enabled children to understand and genuinely learn for the first time, it is no surprise that both the Moja Kids platform and the digital lessons are giving them more confidence in what they can achieve in the future.

Programme staff report that the initiative is enjoying an overwhelmingly positive response from children and teachers alike.

Digital lesson content is being created and translated in Cox’s Bazar, and uploaded regularly, with the system set to deliver 1.5 hours of content twice a day from the beginning of January 2020.

Another two days digital training was also facilitated this quarter for 75 teachers and Project Officers.

“IT’S AN ENTIRELY NEW WAY FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN, HAVE A VOICE AND CONNECT WITH THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF THE REFUGEE CAMPS AND SLUMS”.

JOHN LITTLETON, ASIA REGIONAL MANAGER
MEET FARHANA

Farhana (pictured above) is eight years old and lives near the Dohazari Railway station. She is the youngest of seven children and her father died when she was five after getting a poisonous insect bite that turned septic. This left the family in a desperate situation.

She and her brother now work in the vegetable field along with their mother who also works at the market. Farhana picks the radishes, cucumber, cauliflowers and washes them in the river.

There was no way she was going to be able to go to school, but at the end of 2017, she heard about a new school set up in her area by Children on the Edge and Mukti, that was free to attend. The books, notebooks, pens, pencils, uniforms and school bags were also all free. She can still work in the field in the morning to help her family, but then in the afternoon she can study at school and play with her friends.

Because of what she has learned at school she can count all the money she earns from the field, and helps her mother to do the same. She has learned addition, subtraction and can read Bengali and English. She is also pleased to be able to read newspaper and TV news headlines.

“This FEEL PRIVILEGED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF EDUCATION. I WAS ILLITERATE AND I DON’T WANT MY DAUGHTER TO BE THE SAME. IT WAS A DREAM FOR ME TO EDUCATE MY CHILDREN BUT I WAS HELPLESS, NOW MY DREAM IS COMING TRUE. IT WOULD FILL MY HEART WITH JOY IF SHE COULD LEARN UP TO GRADE 5.”
FARHANA’S MOTHER (TOP RIGHT)