



HOME-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION FOR THE FORCIBLY DISPLACED MYANMAR NATIONALS (ROHINGYA)

Bangladesh has been dealing with forcefully displaced Rohingya communities from the neighbouring Myanmar for more than two decades, which has recently turned into a bigger issue.

Under the Education in the Emergency (EiE) project, VSO, through its implementing partner Mukti Cox's Bazar has been supporting over 6,600 children aged 3-14 years old through 50 home-based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), 12 Learning Centres and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights awareness. The research is focused on evaluation of the home-based ECCE and tries to provide future direction for the project. Objectives of this research include: find out the effectiveness of home-based ECCE for Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar Jamtoli camp and understand how a relational volunteering model is effective for the ECCE in the camp situation. This study followed a mixed method design; both qualitative and quantitative data was collected to understand how a relational volunteering model is effective for the ECCE in the camp situation as well as to evaluate the EiE Project of VSO Bangladesh. A series of research questions were answered through data analysis and critical discussion during this study.

The first research question aimed to explore how the relational volunteering model is effective for the ECCE intervention in the camp. Document review and interpretation of responses depicts that a continuous

two-way communication between the volunteers is present which eventually helps to maintain quality as well as increasing the effectiveness of the volunteers. Moreover, the relational volunteering model contributed towards bringing positive changes among the volunteers in the areas of **quality** and **effectiveness** for implementation of ECCE for the Rohingya children.

VSO Bangladesh is implementing Education in Emergency (EiE) Project in Jamtali Rohingya Camp (Camp #15 that shelters nearly 50,000 Rohingyas) in Cox's Bazar through partnership with Mukti Cox's Bazar. In Jamtoli camp, the majority of Rohingya boys and girls are out of school, making them more vulnerable to violence, trafficking, child labour, child marriage and exploitation. According to the camp's Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), 43.1% of 3-14 years old refugee children were without access to education in September 2018¹. VSO's EiE Project works with Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar primarily focusing on education. The project aims to provide accessible Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and learning opportunities for Rohingya children in a safe environment.

¹ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh/document/education-sector-dashboard-29-september-2018>



Through the volunteering model, the diversified volunteers promoted **participation** of a wide range of stakeholders (i.e. parents, community leaders and community people) in the project. VSO's 'people first' approach was used through the work of the volunteers. Big sisters/mothers are included as community volunteers. With the help of host community volunteers, they have engaged parents and community leaders. Thus, the participation of different stakeholders was ensured through the volunteers which helped to blend 'outside' and 'inside' knowledge for implementing ECCE in the camp.

Being part of the project has developed a sense of ownership among the sisters/mothers, as well as the parents

Another area where the volunteering model has brought changes is the area of **ownership and agency**. The big sisters/mothers have given their homes for ECCE centres and they decorate and try to provide a standard safe environment for the children. For the sisters/mothers, as well as the parents, being part of the project has developed a sense of ownership among them. Additionally, the homes as centres, community big sisters/mothers as facilitators, using local resources

for teaching and learning materials, has made it possible to see the intervention as an intervention of the community rather than an outside intervention, which is also an indication of ownership and agency.

Through the relational volunteering model, VSO is advancing and empowering **collaboration** and networking with different stakeholders and partners for further development of education facilities in the camp. VSO's national volunteers participate in meetings of the education sector for sharing information and in this way the volunteering model helps to keep up a network with other organisations working in that locale. The model contributed largely in maintaining a solid arrangement between diverse stakeholders which inevitably helps for learning and sharing assets within and beyond stakeholders.

The work of VSO Bangladesh, Mukti Cox's Bazar and their respective volunteers has included a large number of children into an education facility who were previously deprived of the right of education. The volunteering model has also enabled the big sisters/mothers working as an agent of **inclusion** and by that their inclusion in development work has become a possibility. Due to their conservative nature, the Rohingya community always has kept their woman outside of developmental work. As a part of the model,

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these big sisters are contributing to their society as well as earning money for their family even by working in their house. So, it can be said that the volunteering approach of the project has successfully included two of the most marginalized groups of Jamtoli camp in the arena of education and development.

The volunteers are acting as a catalyst for **innovation** in this project. Addressing the space problem by using the houses of community people, empowering big sisters/mothers through their role as facilitator, protecting vulnerable children of the camp with the umbrella of education are some of the innovative ways of providing support to the Rohingya people of the project. With the power of volunteerism, the home-based ECCE intervention provides a unique way of ensuring the rights of the children in a fragile context like a camp situation.

The study team did not find direct evidence from the respondents about the other two dimensions ('**social action**' and '**inspiration**') of VSO's relational model. However, interpretation of data and the work of diversified volunteers provide pictures of social action; which might occur if parents come forward for the well-being of the community and be more active citizens after seeing big sisters/mothers serving for them. On the other hand, observing the dedication of international and national volunteers, it might inspire the community volunteers to work diligently, especially the works of international volunteers from Kenya might have inspired some people.

It has been found that 90-95% parents are satisfied with big sisters/mothers' qualification, their ability to teach children, their relationship with children, time management, knowledge on education content and skills of using materials in the classroom. It can also be seen that a very minimum level of dissatisfaction (2-10%) lies in a few parents regarding the mentioned aspects in which big sisters'/mothers' qualification is greatest.

Addressing the space problem by using the houses of community people is an innovative way of providing support to the Rohingya people of the project

- 90-95% of parents are satisfied with big sisters/mothers' qualification
- More than 98% of parents are satisfied with the cleanliness, location and safety of the home-based centres
- Most of the parents and teachers have positive opinions regarding children's learning and behavioural changes that came through home-based ECCE
- Data from ISCG show that multiple interventions in the camp have made a big difference to refugee children as the percentage of 3-14 years old without access to education has reduced to 16.11% in July 2019²

It has also been seen that most of the big sisters/mothers are motivated in teaching in home-based ECCE and have built their confidence in teaching through training and guidance. They have developed their basic skills of teaching, but it needs regular nurturing through on the job training. Parents are also found to be quite satisfied with the big sisters/mothers' skills of teaching.

Most of the parents and teachers have positive opinions regarding children's learning and behavioural changes that came through home-based ECCE. This intervention is also aligned with the Learning Competency Framework and Approach (LCFA) framework for level 1—early learning. Activity based content is designed under each domain of development which allows multi-dimensional development of children. Therefore, the achievement of learning in this intervention implies the achievement of LCFA as well.

It was also found that most of the big sisters/mothers, volunteers, parents, local staff and children are all quite in harmony with each other. In most of the cases, Majhis (community leaders) are effectively working with them but in some cases Majhis need to be more pro-active in taking leadership in resolving issues.



² <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh/document/education-sector-dashboard-and-5w-analysis-on-28-july-2019>

Finally, it was found that home-based intervention is preferred by the stakeholders over learning centres for the ECCE intervention of this specific age-group considering the issues of child protection, shortage of space in the camp situation and weather extremities. More than 98% of parents are also satisfied with the cleanliness, location and security and safety of the home-based centres.

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Fiona Kirby talks with the Rohingya children at the home based child friendly center at Jamtoli, Ukhiya.

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