

BANGLADESH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

KEYWORDS:

REFUGEE, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING, SERVICE MONITORING, FEEDBACK MECHANISM

CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT	Ethnic Violence
DATE OF EVENT CAUSING DISPLACEMENT	25 August 2017 - Present
PEOPLE DISPLACED	More than 894,187 refugees identified in camps as of 31st October 2018 ¹
PROJECT LOCATION	Sub-district of Ukhiya, Teknaf under the district, Cox's Bazar
PROJECT DURATION	March - October 2018
NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED BY THE PROJECT	50,500 beneficiaries ²
CCCM COORDINATION MECHANISM	Sectoral working group



SUMMARY:

The Site Management Project aims to improve the living standard of the camp population and host community in Cox's Bazar by supporting the government of Bangladesh's Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) Camp in Charge to ensure equitable access to services and protection for displaced Rohingya living in Camp 15 (Jamtoli). The project established community development structures through a system of block and sub-block committees (BDCs) to ensure effective and targeted delivery and monitoring of the services, assist with the relocation of vulnerable households, ensure accountability through a complaint-response mechanism and liaise across different activity-based committees. The project activities were coordinated with the site management sector and implemented within the framework of the sector strategy to improve quality of life and dignity and to advocate for solutions.



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Women-friendly centres have become a hub for women to share their experiences.

CONTEXT

The United Nations has called the Rohingya the world's most persecuted minority group. Since the 1970s, Rohingya refugees have been coming to Bangladesh from Myanmar. The most recent violence stems from Myanmar's military crackdown³ after an armed Rohingya group carried out a deadly attack against the army in retaliation to their constant struggle for peace, identity and dignity. Since then the army has killed more than 400 people and driven out hundreds of thousands from the western Rakhine state, creating one of the biggest refugee crises of recent times. The latest exodus began on 25 August 2017, when violence broke out in Myanmar's Rakhine State. The Rohingya are now a stateless⁴ Muslim minority, often arriving in Bangladesh after walking for days through jungles and mountains, or embarking on dangerous sea voyages across the Bay of Bengal.⁵

The refugees have been settled in makeshift camps in Cox's Bazar, where a concerted effort to respond to the emergency has been carried out by the implementing agency. Working as Site Management Agency (SMA) for camp 15 and working together with other humanitarian agencies to ensure coordination among service providers, find gaps and service provisions, address set standards and reflect community needs in service delivery.

Before the August 2017 influx, there were two registered camps and two makeshift places for Rohingya people where they were authorised to live. As for the area of camp 15, there was no settled camp. As the influx began, the Government and humanitarian agencies began immediate response, but none of the actors were prepared for the scale and complex dynamics of the influx. The humanitarian capacity on the ground was being rapidly exhausted. Post-influx, the Government of Bangladesh, UN agencies and humanitarian actors worked together to build shelters and provide basic services for the Rohingya people. Camp facilities were also constructed, including Child/Women Friendly Spaces, religious facilities, WASH facilities, health clinics and protection facilities.

Camp 15 was one of the largest new spontaneous settlements in Cox's Bazar and was divided into 8 blocks with a population of approximately 50,000 Rohingya people. As the implementing agency took charge of camp coordination and camp management in camp 15 in Jamtoli as the focal organisation for Site Management, a leadership role in establishing an inclusive and participatory community development structure was taken up. The aim of the community development structures was to ensure a community-based participatory approach that was community-owned and contributed to their own protection. Coordination between the community development structure and different sector groups was imperative to create alignment and minimise gaps in such a complex emergency response.

PROJECT

CCCM ACTIVITIES

For this project, a community development system was established consisting of a series of block and sub-block committees. The Block Development Committees (BDCs) addressed a number of issues within camp 15 including general protection, accountability, service delivery, household relocation and coordination of various activity-based committees.

In cases of general protection issues, BDC members were informed immediately by the members of the community and then passed on information to the implementing agencies. Previously, protection issues were directly referred to the Army, Site Management Agency (SMA) and/or the Camp-in-Charge (CiC),⁶ but with the formation of the BDCs and coordination with implementing agencies, cases have been addressed in a timelier manner with a clear way to follow up on referrals.

With a focus on ensuring accountability for effective site management, the BDCs played a significant role by establishing a complaint-response mechanism as part of the accountability process. BDC members mobilised the camp population to inform the SMA regarding protection and other issues through complaint boxes and when possible, demonstrated the response the SMA carried out to address those complaints.

In cases of delivering services, such as establishing latrines or hand wash stations, BDC members collaborate with the implementing agencies to identify the most suitable place for installation. For example, recently site management identified areas/blocks for the installation of street solar lights in consultation with BDCs as they were aware of which area / blocks is more vulnerable in the night time due to lack of street light.

BDCs also supported site management in the relocation of households to new areas, particularly engaging with identified households living in hazard risk areas to help them understand the risks associated with staying in their existing place. Eventually they were able to relocate 142 households out of 390 identified households, with some households refusing to move due to different reasons such as service accessibility.

Camp 15 included a number of activity-based committees such as the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) committee, safety committee, graveyard committee and cyclone preparedness program committee. All of these committees included a certain percentage of BDC members from the relevant blocks along with additional community members. This system meant that BDC members were also connected with different committees, which was useful to ensure alignment across the community development structure. For example, site management engagement with BDC members of the DRR committee in resilience audit data collection.

A key task of site management was to establish the balance between these roles and how BDC members play in at different points. For example, if BDC members were on specific committees, then these members were trained to speak for their committee along with expressing their individual opinion.

Site management was also working closely with the local government. The Camp-in-Charge (CiC), who were senior government officials appointed by the RRRRC as the leading government authority in each designated camp, adjusted activities as necessary to align with government priorities based on humanitarian principles.



Community people, female and male participating in a BDC meeting.

IMPLEMENTATION

When the SMA began operation, the Majhi system was in practice where Rohingya community leaders of blocks and sub blocks were appointed by the Army and Camp-in-Charge (CiC). The Majhi system was not established with the participation of the Rohingya community and does not reflect a participatory process and lacks accountability. Women were not represented in Majhi or allowed to participate in the decision making, therefore there has been no gender representation in the system.⁷ In some cases, the Majhis used their influence to control camp dynamics. Hence, it was necessary to develop a community-based system to ensure efficient delivery of services and accountability among different actors as well as to limit Majhis' roles in humanitarian aid provisions. Developing an alternative system was challenging. Preliminary discussions occurred with the Army on site (to ensure security) and Camp-in-Charge (CiC). Both actors found that the proposed community-based approach would be instrumental to ensure unified service delivery.

Initially, it was difficult to include women in the community development structure, as they preferred not talking to community mobilisers and were reluctant to be a part of governance structure. A series of community consultations were carried out to mobilise refugee men and women. In order to support refugee women to participate more than half of the community mobilisers were female.

In camp 15, the 8 blocks were split into 100 sub-blocks forming sub-block development committees (SBDCs). Each SBDC had 10 members and nominated 2 members to form the Block Development Committees (BDCs). The BDCs were gender-balanced and inclusive in structure, with one female and one

male representatives for each sub-block. The BDCs also included one elderly member, 2 adolescents, (one male and one female), and 2 representatives from differently-abled people. Members were selected through consensus during sub-block level meetings. The Camp Development Committee (CDC) has 17 members, with 16 members representing the 8 blocks. Roles and responsibilities of BDC and CDC members was specified through written Terms of Reference (ToR). While the BDC meetings were held weekly and covered issues arising in the blocks, the CDC meetings were held bi-weekly and covered issues that arise in the entire camp. Meeting discussions were documented and then sent to the CiC office for a decision on the meetings.

Through community consultations, member nominees were selected at block level by the block communities, after which the Committee members received multiple trainings for instance on disaster risk reduction, first aid, grave yard and dead body management. With the BDCs activated, information dissemination and receiving feedback from the community was enhanced.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

The project improved the overall community access to information resulting in reduced influence of the Majhis' role particularly by establishing accountability mechanisms, reducing corruption and making service delivery more effective. The project was partially successful in limiting the Majhis' role in delivering humanitarian aid and addressing protection issues through meaningful participation.

ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Community members were actively participating in service delivery and community development
- As the monsoon season approached, the SBDCs and BDCs worked to identify households vulnerable to landslides and flooding. 390 households were identified and 142 relocated.
- There were ensured alignment of community development across all camp-based committees by having BDC members involved in different activity-based committees.
- The established disaster risk reduction received trainings contributing to the general understanding and knowledge of DRR issues within the camps.
- The SBDCs and BDCs established a complaint-response system enhancing the accountability mechanism within the camp.

CHALLENGES

- In Camp 15, every block selected a Majhi to become a BDC member, whereas other camps did not select Majhis into the committees when given the opportunity. In this case the selection reinforced the Majhis legitimacy as “camp leadership”.
- The frequent updating and membership changes within the committees posed a challenge to retain knowledge and introduce new members to agreed procedures and activities.
- Some members of the BDCs expected monetary benefits in exchange for their service in the community development structure.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Through coordination and recognition of all stakeholders, the site management team mitigated initial conflict with community members while introducing the system of block and sub-block committees.
- It was critical to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the members of the committees and strengthening volunteerism.
- Shared decision-making processes facilitate greater buy-in from the communities and support the development of shared solutions.
- Defining the community as service users, enhanced the accountability of the site management agency and service providing agencies.

¹ Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), Situation Report Data Summary on Rohingya Refugee Crisis

² as per NPM (Round 8)

³ Source

⁴ Source

⁵ The case study context was drafted in accordance with the news reports published in Bangladesh's National TV and newspaper.

⁶ The Camp in Charges (CIC) are senior government officials appointed by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) as the leading government authority within each designated camp. CICs are frequently seconded by the Government of Bangladesh from across various Ministries to serve within the RRRC Office for periods ranging from a few months to over a year. In line with RRRC policies and directives, the CICs oversee all humanitarian actors within their respective camps and ensure close coordination at the field level with other GoB divisions, such as local elected officials, police, and the Army.

⁷ More information on the Protection Considerations on the Majhi System can be found [here](#).



Rohingya women record their complaints in a device which are then addressed by Site Management Agency.