



Learning Paper:

Caritas Bangladesh Community-Based Protection Program in Cox's Bazar during COVID-19



Table of Acronyms

BFC	Barefoot Counsellor
CBP	Community-based Protection
CDI	Caritas Development Institute
CFS	Child Friendly Spaces
CMC	Centre Management Committee
GBV	Gender-based Violence
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Health
WFS	Women Friendly Spaces

Acknowledgement

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Cover page: Rohingya camp, Cox's Bazar.

Key Learnings and Recommendations

AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

• Key Learning

The disruption of the community-based protection (CBP) programs due to COVID-related government restrictions in the Rohingya camps and host communities have contributed to an increase in domestic violence and reported protection cases.

• Recommendation

That all relevant stakeholders including **international actors, multilateral agencies, government and non-government stakeholders and national humanitarian agencies** recognise protection programs as an essential service, including during COVID-19 lockdowns, for the Rohingya and host communities.

• Key Learning

There is limited coordination between CBP committees in the Rohingya camps established by different NGOs, which contributes to confusion about roles and responsibilities.

• Recommendation

That all relevant stakeholders, including **international actors, multilateral agencies, government and non-government stakeholders and national humanitarian agencies and the communities**, establish an experimental model of connected CBP committees across an entire camp, involving a centralised committee at camp level and sub-committees at block level, with monthly meetings where camp residents can participate and access information and protection services.

• Key Learning

There is insufficient security presence at night in the camps, which particularly impacts women-headed households.

• Recommendation

That all relevant stakeholders including **international actors, multilateral agencies, government and non-government stakeholders, national humanitarian agencies, local authorities and the communities**, increase the night-time presence of authorized security agencies throughout the camp under the management of Camp in Charge for ongoing safety and wellbeing of the camp community.

AT A PROGRAM LEVEL

• Key Learning

Caritas Bangladesh's CBP programs are effective in addressing violence and promoting resilience and peaceful relationships:

- The Barefoot Counsellor volunteers play an important role in preventing violence, trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence and child abuse.
- Caritas Bangladesh' strict practice of confidentiality builds trust and encourages community members to report cases of sexual and gender-based violence
- Training of volunteers and staff is effective and contributed to community capacity-building
- The CBP approach has strengthened networking in the camps and has promoted inclusivity
- CBP complaint mechanisms are helping to resolve disputes and to foster resilience and peaceful coexistence

• Recommendation

That **funding partners** provide adequate resourcing required for ongoing support, capacity building, training and mentoring of staff and volunteers involved in CBP, and to support collaboration and networking between implementing agencies

• Key Learning

Women are members of CBP committees, but many need further support to play a stronger functional leadership role in CBP.

• Recommendation

That **Caritas Bangladesh** explores strategies to increase the inclusion of women in functional leadership roles within the committees for the Barefoot Counselling, Women Friendly Spaces and Child Friendly Spaces programs.

• Key Learning

Recreational programs and employment for men and male youth are limited and were identified as a growing problem in both Rohingya and host communities

• Recommendation

That **Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies** provide more employment and recreational programs for men and male youth (aged 15-24 years) in the camps and the host community and conduct further research on how to improve the engagement of men and male youth on protection issues.

That **funding partners** provide adequate resourcing for these programs.

• Key Learning

There is insufficient awareness within the Rohingya camps and host communities of their protection rights.

• Recommendation

That **Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies** enhance an integrated human development approach to service delivery in the CBP program to increase accessibility to basic services.

That **Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies** incorporate social behaviour change communication into the CBP program to support a positive gender-based community relations and conduct KAP study on changes of social behavior and positive relations.

• Key Learning

Community members are volunteers and participants of the CBP programs; however there is opportunity to increase community networking and community leadership of the programs.

• Recommendation

That **Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies** work with the camp and host communities to explore opportunities and strategies to strengthen community engagement, participation and ownership of the CBP initiatives to enhance long-term sustainability of the CBP approach.

• Key Learning

More systematic documentation, monitoring and evaluation process, and research on CBP will further improve effectiveness.

• Recommendation

That **funding partners, Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies** provide adequate resourcing required for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning to improve effectiveness and long-term sustainability of CBP programs.

Introduction



Cox's Bazar is home to more than one million Rohingya, who live in cramped informal housing in camps, with limited access to protection needs, clean water, health care, education and employment options, after fleeing the conflict in Rakhine state in Myanmar in 2017.

The crisis has not only changed the landscape, but also had an impact on the social dynamics in the area. The Rohingya population, also known as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN) has suffered violence in different forms prior to arriving at the camps – physical and mental abuse, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), exploitation - and continue to experience ongoing protection risks, such as domestic violence, child abuse and early marriage, after their arrival in Bangladesh.

Caritas Bangladesh, in working with these communities, has observed that the Rohingya and host communities living in Cox's Bazar experience a range of protection issues. To support communities to overcome these difficulties, Caritas Bangladesh has established and implemented a number of Community-Based Protection (CPB) programs over the last three years – a Barefoot Counsellors (BFC) program that trains and supports community volunteers to respond to protection needs, Women Friendly Spaces (WFS) and Child Friendly Spaces (CFS).

Through activities that promote community engagement, awareness-raising, response, prevention and protection risk mitigation, Caritas Bangladesh's main goal is to build resilience, foster peaceful coexistence and strengthen relationships between the Rohingya and host communities. For this learning paper, resilience is defined as the capacity of the communities in the Cox's Bazar camps and host communities to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from protection risks and hazards in an efficient way that also reduces long-term vulnerability.

Context

Caritas Bangladesh and Caritas Australia have an established partnership of over 45 years. Caritas Bangladesh has extensive experience in humanitarian response and development programming and has a training and research centre, the Caritas Development Institute. Caritas Bangladesh and the Caritas Development Institute undertook this research with the support of Caritas Australia. This learning paper summarises the key findings of a research report produced by the Caritas Development Institute.

The CBP program is aligned with the United Nations Joint Response Plan 2020 for agencies working in the humanitarian sector in the camps. Caritas Bangladesh is implementing a wider humanitarian program as part of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership. The program includes an outcome on basic needs where Rohingya and host communities are safer and live in dignity, with more equitable access to protection and humanitarian assistance.

Objectives

The learning paper explores the findings and learnings of the CBP program implemented by Caritas Bangladesh, and sets out clear recommendations for the future. As the program aimed at building resilience, fostering peaceful coexistence and strengthening relationships between Rohingya and host communities, the study focused on having a better understanding of community perceptions, beliefs, values, and practices in regards to the community mechanisms implemented by the program for their protection and wellbeing.

Five key learning questions guided the research and helped to identify and analyse the main protection risks, effectiveness of the activities implemented, main achievements of the program, and how to promote long-term, sustainable changes in the communities. These were:

Learning question 1: What are the protection risks and barriers to men, women, boys and girls from Rohingya and host communities?

Learning question 2: How has Caritas Bangladesh's interventions of Barefoot Counsellors, Women Friendly Spaces and Child Friendly Spaces helped to ensure functional CBP risk management?

Learning question 3: Has Caritas Bangladesh's approach of capacity building and training of volunteers been effective in supporting people at risk of protection at the individual and community level?

Learning question 4: In what ways has CBP approach improved resilience and fostered a peaceful co-existence of both Rohingya and host communities?

Learning question 5: How can the CBP programs be expanded and made more sustainable and effective?

Through these questions, it was possible to map the functional pathways or mechanisms through which people respond to protection risks.

Caritas Bangladesh's CBP approach

Barefoot Counsellors program

The Barefoot Counsellors (BFC) program empowers Rohingya community members to gain knowledge and skills as volunteers to support other camp community members through activities such as psychosocial support, community engagement and awareness raising. The program reinforces the natural solidarity networks in the community through progressive capacity building of volunteers in protection and GBV counselling, household visits, information and awareness sessions, and reporting.

Women Friendly Spaces

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a constant and ongoing threat, especially to women and girls in the camps. To raise awareness on GBV issues and services and to promote long-term behavioural changes in the community, Caritas Bangladesh has been implementing Women Friendly Spaces (WFS) with the support of their partners. Through WFS, women and girls have found an opportunity to address trauma and build a safety net for psychosocial support. They receive psychological support, participate in awareness raising sessions on gender-related challenges and women's health and education, and receive technical training to become financially self-reliant. There are 5 WFS at present in the camps.

Methodology

Child Friendly Spaces

Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) provide Rohingya children with safe environments for psycho-social support and wellbeing. These spaces and activities were developed based on preferences expressed by Rohingya mothers and fathers, and in accordance with the UNICEF Practical Guide for Developing Child Friendly Spaces. CFS are run by supportive staff ('animators') who have been trained in child protection and safeguarding, psycho-social support and child-center active learning approach. There are 11 CFS located in the camps. A total of 6,811 children (4-12 years) and 986 adolescents (12 -16 years) were reached between 2018 to 2020.

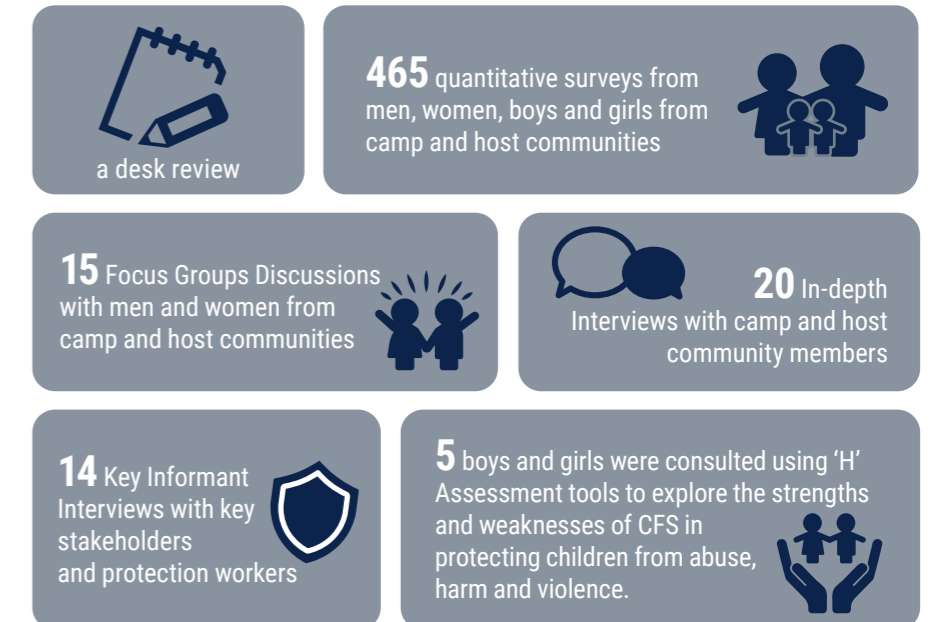
Disruption due to COVID-19

With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, programming in the camps was disrupted due to government restrictions to ensure the spread of the virus is minimised. However, the volatile nature of COVID-19 has increasingly disrupted programming for Caritas Bangladesh in the camps and from March 2020 to July 2021, all protection programs have been disrupted and at times completely suspended.



Training provided by a volunteer in a Women Friendly Space.

This study used a mixed-method approach to collecting and analysing data, involving:



Data collection was conducted in December 2021.

Consultation

The draft learning paper was shared with the Cox's Bazar Protection Working Group at the UNHCR compound, Cox's Bazar, in a meeting held in April 2022 which comprised participants from 29 international, national and local NGOs. Feedback and suggestions from the participants were validated and incorporated into the final learning paper.

Considerations

Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and their ability to end participation at any point and offered the opportunity to ask questions about the activity before giving consent. Verbal consent was obtained because of the overall low levels of literacy in Bengali among Rohingya participants. Training of enumerators by CDI included key policies and Code of Conduct. Enumerators received instructions on how to maintain confidentiality and conduct interviews in a culturally sensitive, nonjudgmental manner. Participants were provided with a Caritas Bangladesh hotline number for GBV services in case they needed support.

Limitations

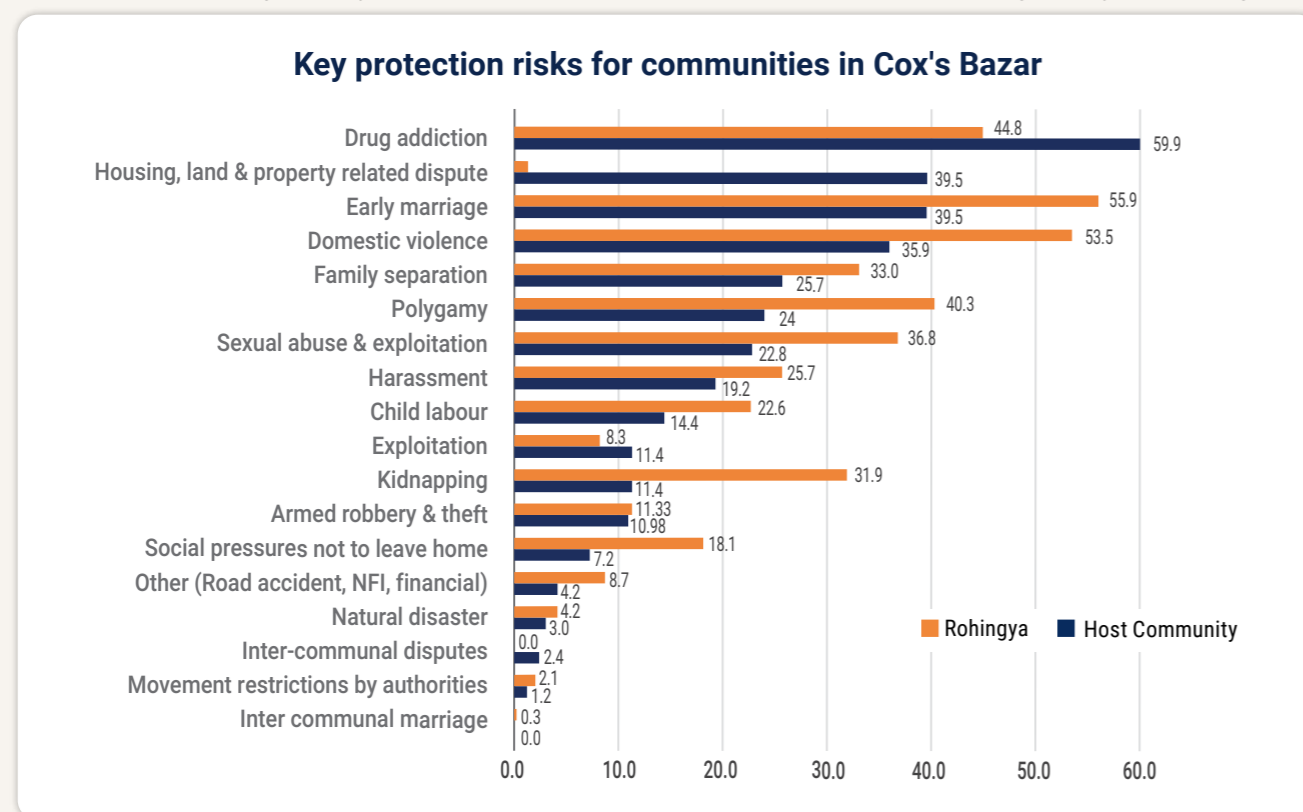
Accessing some of the most vulnerable women in the Rohingya camps and host communities was challenging. For example, women with disabilities and severely victimized women were hard to reach due to the barriers they face in accessing protection services generally. Challenges during the data collection phase, including the fact that CBP programming had been disrupted for half a year, limited the quality of the data; however data quality was improved through a second round of data collection. The local enumerator's team had limited previous experience in using the data collection tools, and the three day training and capacity building period may not have been sufficient to ensure that data collectors had become proficient and confident in the research methodology and tools. Mentoring by the research team over the course of the study served to mitigate this limitation to some degree.

Learnings and recommendations

Learning Question 1: What are the protection risks and barriers to men, women, boys and girls for Rohingya and host communities?

Learning: Key protection risks include drug addiction, early marriage, domestic violence, kidnapping/attack and polygamy. According to survey respondents and focus groups participants, the top five key protection risks are drug addiction, early marriage, domestic violence, kidnapping/attack and polygamy. Other protection risks are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key protection risks in camp and host communities, identified through surveys and focus groups



Learning: Due to COVID-19, there was also an increase in domestic violence and reported protection cases. This was aggravated by limited options for recreation and employment opportunities. Focus group and key informants mentioned, in relation to GBV and domestic violence, that inadequate livelihood opportunities as well as financial stress were fuelling frustration and anger that spills over into domestic relationships. Women participants explained that “when their husbands come home, discussing a lack of money or food will lead to violent arguments”.

The interruption or suspension of community programs such as BFC, WFS and CFS have also contributed to an increase in protection cases, as explained on page 12.

Learning: Inadequate recreational programs for men and male youth, combined with limited opportunities for employment and entertainment have been identified as a growing problem in both Rohingya and host communities. Most participants of the focus groups believe that these are the main reasons for drug addiction which exacerbates violence against women and girls. This study recommends the establishment of recreational programs for men and boys to improve physical and mental health, tackle drug addiction and reduce GBV. Another recommendation is to conduct further research on how to further engage and educate men and boys on GBV and child protection issues.

“It’s not easy to get work in the camps. There are schools for children and friendly spaces for women but not for us. We are tense about our future, but there’s not much we can do.”

-Rohingya man, 20 years old

Recommendation: That Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies provide more employment and recreational programs for men and male youth in the camps and the host communities and conduct further research on how to improve the engagement of men and male youth on protection issues.

Learning: In general, women experience higher protection risks than men. In both camp and host communities, women were significantly more likely to have experienced violence than men (61% vs 39%). This violence can occur in many forms, but participants reported that abduction, polygamy and early marriage have increased remarkably at both camp and host communities in the last months, which contributed to an escalated number of cases of gender-based violence.

Learning: The risk of violence is higher in the host communities, which may be due to more limited CBP programming and activities compared to camp communities. Overall, 69% of women from host communities were likely to have experienced violence, while in the camps this number is slightly lower: 62%. In relation to children, 57% of children from the host communities were likely to have experienced violence against 38% of children from the camps.

Learning: Violence mostly occurs at home where women and girls are at heightened risk of experiencing physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse by a family member or neighbour, while collecting water or in public areas. For example, in the camps and in the host communities, the most common perpetrator of violence was identified as being neighbours, followed by family members, husbands and parents.

Learning: As the number of gender-based violence cases increase, so does the fear of abduction and abuse. Among women and girls from the camps, 68% felt unsafe moving outside the camp or block areas, while 43% felt unsafe moving around the camp. Therefore, women and children have restricted their movement

outside of their shelter, block or camp, which had a strong impact on their wellbeing.

Learning: There is insufficient security presence at night in the camp which increases the community’s fears of violence and other criminal activities, and has a particularly heightened impact on women-headed households. In focus group discussions, block leaders, Majhis and other participants from the three study camps recommended that the camp authorities should increase the level of regular night presence of authorized security agencies throughout the camp under the management of Camp in Charge. The recommendation is to increase security measures in camps such as patrols and better lighting especially at night, to protect community members especially women-headed households, from violence and other criminal activities.

Recommendation: That all relevant stakeholders including, international and national humanitarian organisations and local authorities, increase security, especially at night, in camps to protect community members from sexual violence as well as criminal activities.

Learning: Most camp residents know about Caritas Bangladesh’s existing complaint mechanisms, and do report protection incidents, however there is limited access to legal services and the judicial system.

In the camp communities, challenges include:

- Limited access to legal aid services, due to threats from perpetrators as well as limited functionality and capacity of key legal and judicial institutions and support services, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Limited access to support from law enforcement agencies in filing and resolving sensitive protection cases, especially cases related to SGBV and child protection.

Recommendation: That funding partners and all relevant stakeholders increase resources and capacity to enable legal and judicial institutions, e.g. law enforcement, to provide adequate and timely services to referred cases from camp and host communities.

Learnings and recommendations

Learning Question 2: How has Caritas Bangladesh' interventions of Barefoot Counselling (BFC), Women Friendly Spaces (WFS) and Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) helped to ensure functional CBP risk management?

The BFC, WFS and CFS programs were very effective in promoting peaceful coexistence of people in the community, however, the interruption of these programs due to COVID-19 pandemic and the government limiting access in the camps has increased protection risks.

Community members indicated that these programs, while in operation, contributed to reducing violence against women and girls, decreasing child abuse, and promoting overall wellbeing in the community. The vast majority of survey participants responded positively about the programs, demonstrating how important these activities are to promote safer and more peaceful environments.

Learning: The BFC volunteers play an important role in preventing violence, trafficking and other forms of GBV and child abuse.

In addition, perpetrators tend to feel intimidated by the volunteers and their influence in the community.

“Due to regular visits from the BFC volunteers, domestic and family violence has reduced significantly, as the men of the households feel pressured to respond about protection harms during the volunteers' visits.”

– Community member, Camp 20 extension

Perceptions of the effectiveness of the BFC program by respondents from camp communities was measured using a Likert scale:

- 95% reported that the support of BFC volunteers was 'somewhat' or 'very' effective in managing protection risks
- 88% reported that BFC volunteer activities contributed to building resilience and peace
- 88% reported that BFC volunteer activity contributed to reducing GBV and child abuse
- 88% reported that their capacity to cope with disasters, health and protection risks had improved

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a challenging protection context for the Rohingya and

host communities. At the same time that protection concerns are escalating, government restrictions for service delivery in the camps have been limited to 'essential services' which include basic WASH and health but not protection. Caritas recognizes the need for appropriate measures to manage COVID-19 risks, however the restriction, interruption or suspension of CBP programs during a time of heightened protection needs is exacerbating protection risks for community members. It is recommended that protection be recognised as an essential service during COVID-19 lockdowns for Rohingya and host communities alongside WASH and health services, to ensure ongoing protection and safety.

Learning: The interruption of the BFC program under CBP activities due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the government restrictions in the camps has contributed to an increase in protection concerns and risks.

Barefoot Counselling was interrupted from March 2020 to September 2020, and was suspended entirely from September 2020 to January 2021. Community members reported feeling less safe when the BFC volunteers are not able to intervene for them. Barefoot counsellors reported that with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic between March-May 2020, domestic violence increased due to no work or recreation as well as the interruption of the BFC program. This was reflected in a rise in the number of reported protection cases (see Figure 2). Focus Group and Key Informant Interview participants reported that an increase in protection concerns was observed in September 2020, especially drug addiction, polygamy and domestic violence.

“We are not feeling comfortable with the absence of the BFC volunteers as now we can't easily seek their help and advice on humanitarian issues and express our concerns related to protection risks.”

– Community member, Camp 4 extension

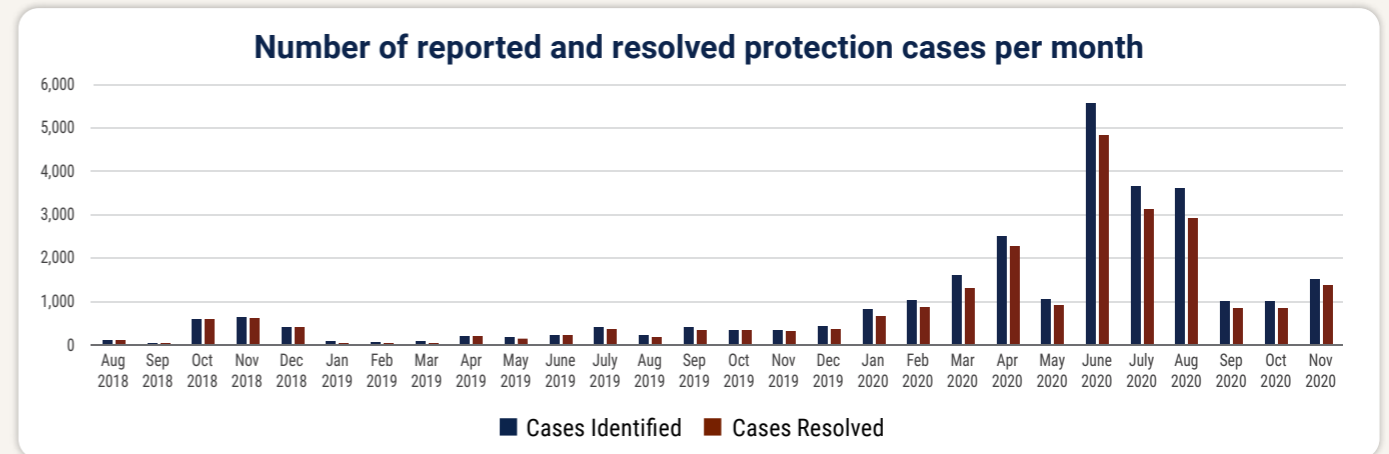


Figure 2: Number of reported and resolved protection cases per month

Learning: The WFS interventions helped to increase knowledge and disseminate information about gender-based violence, protection risks and COVID-19 risks and measures. The WFS program was considered 'very effective' or 'extremely effective' by 95% of the respondents. The WFS interventions helped to raise awareness about both health and protection risks, including domestic violence and child protection. Focus group discussions conducted after the sessions revealed that participant's knowledge on these issues has increased.

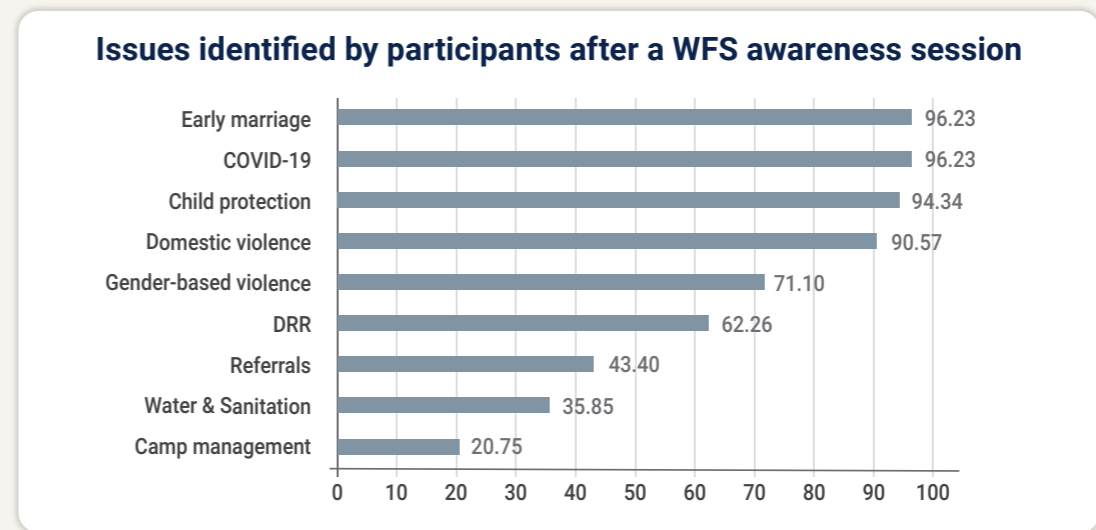


Figure 3: Issues identified by participants after a WFS awareness session: percentage distribution of responses (multiple responses)

“There are many risks associated with child marriage, such as early pregnancy, death during labor, and sexual or pregnancy related health complications, as well as the social difficulties of being a young mother, young widow or divorcee”.

– Focus Group participant on issues related to GBV

“We should avoid crowds or gatherings, avoid touching our eyes, nose and mouth, and maintain at least a 1-meter distance from other people. It's important to wear a mask regularly, wash our hands with soap, and stay at home.”

– Focus Group participant on the health measures related to COVID-19

As a result of participating in the WFS program, focus group participants reported feeling more resilient to managing protection and health risks. Compared to two years earlier:

- 79% reported a 'moderate' to 'high' level of resilience to coping against early marriage, trafficking/kidnapping, rape or drug addiction
- 75% reported a 'moderate' to 'very high' level of resilience to cope with health risks (personal and menstrual hygiene, reproductive health and Covid-19)

Learnings and recommendations

Learning: CFS program is key to promoting physical and psycho-social wellbeing among children.

The majority of parents in focus group discussions reported that the psycho-social wellbeing of their children has improved remarkably as a result of the mental health and psychosocial support provided through the CFS, compared to two years earlier.

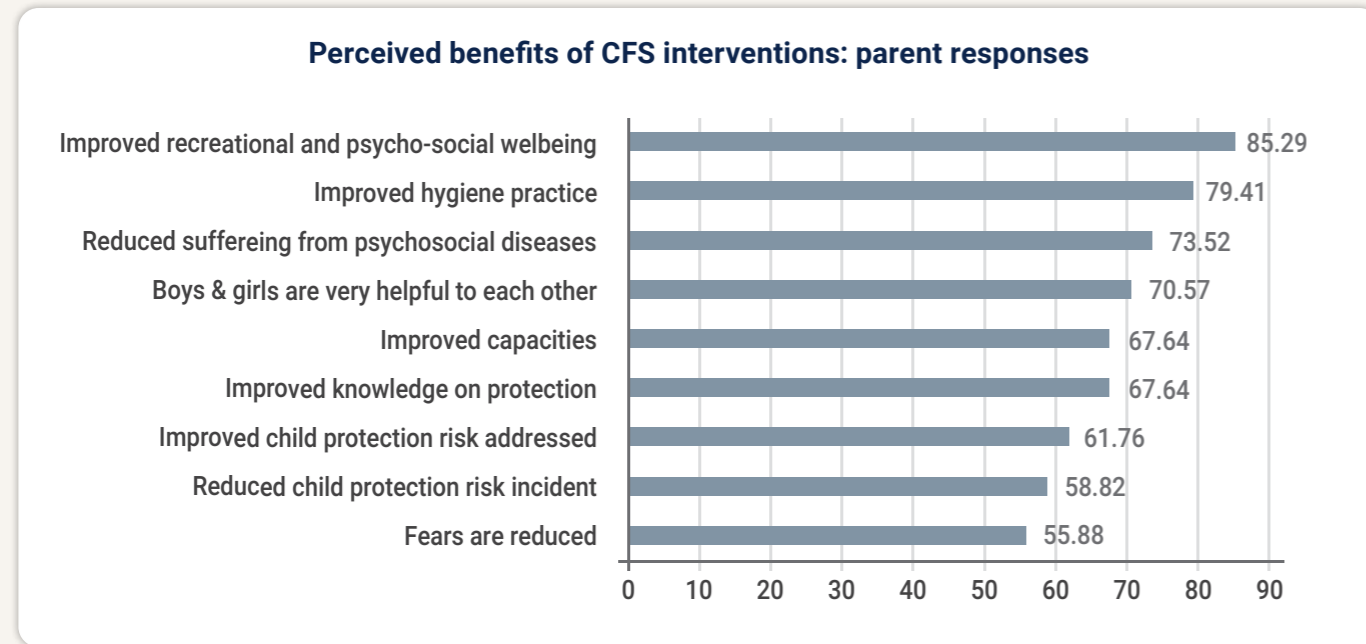


Figure 4: Percentage distribution of parent's response to the effectiveness of CFS intervention for children (multiple response)

Recommendation: That all relevant stakeholders recognise protection programs as an essential service, including during COVID-19 lockdowns, for the Rohingya and the host communities, to ensure ongoing protection and safety.



Using a hand washing station in a Rohingya camp.



Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar.

Learning Question 3: How effective has Caritas Bangladesh's approach of Capacity building and training of volunteers been at supporting people at risk of protection at the individual and community level?

Learning: Caritas Bangladesh' strict practice of confidentiality builds trust and encourages community members to report SGBV cases

One of the main challenges facing Barefoot Counsellors and staff is maintaining the confidentiality of the victim/survivor in a crowded camp community. Harassment and intimidation by the perpetrator aggravate this problem. Interventions to address this challenge include a commitment by all volunteers and staff involved in the CBP initiatives to maintain strict confidentiality of reported complaints, such as protecting any identifying details of the victim/survivor in reports during case management.

Camp respondents reported that they felt confident approaching Barefoot Counsellors to share their concerns and to report cases of abuse and violence because of the Counsellors' assurance of confidentiality.

"the Barefoot Counsellor and CB's humanitarian staff have the patience to listen to our frustration and concerns wholeheartedly. They

gave special attention to our concerns, provided awareness on different issues and psychosocial counselling, and where needed, appropriately referred us to the concerned agencies and followed up our case. We trust them only because they maintained the confidentiality of our reported SGBV-related complaints."

– Focus group participant, Camp 4 Extension

Learning: Training of volunteers and staff is effective and contributed to community capacity-building

Caritas Bangladesh's CBP program organized a series of almost two dozen training courses for all of Caritas Bangladesh's humanitarian staff and CBP volunteers on topics such as protection issues and principles, rights and policies, referral pathways, case management and issue-based training.

Caritas Bangladesh's humanitarian workers were asked for their perceptions of Caritas Bangladesh's CBP

training, using a Likert scale and a set of 16 statements relating to quality of training delivery and resources, and impact on their performance. Overall there was agreement that the training programs were effective and improved their performance in the CBP program. The analysis also identified a few elements where the response was 'neutral' and could be explored for improving.

After the suspension of the BFC program in September 2020, most of the Barefoot Counsellors were recruited by other humanitarian organizations through competitive recruitment procedures. Their training and experience with Caritas Bangladesh's CBP program contributed to their success in finding jobs.

"My job placement at the higher position was possible only because of Caritas Bangladesh's capacity building training'. The interviewer asked me about the protection risks and protection principles, confidentiality, SGBV, referrals etc. in the interview board which was very easy to answer for me because I learned the protection subject matter from the training organized by Caritas Bangladesh."

– former Barefoot Counsellor

One of the Camp in Charge (CiC) representatives noted that the performance of Caritas Bangladesh's Barefoot Counsellors and staff are amongst the best of the humanitarian agencies and "helps easy management of the camp, especially regarding the protection issues."

Ongoing training and support of volunteers is needed to respond to growing protection concerns due to COVID-19, the changing pattern of protection needs, influxes of new camp residents, turnover of volunteers and to maintain best practice by staff and volunteers including strict confidentiality. This will strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the programs.

Recommendation: That funding partners provide adequate resourcing for ongoing support, capacity building, training and mentoring of CBP staff and volunteers.

Recommendation: That funding partners provide adequate resourcing for ongoing support, capacity building, training and mentoring of CBP staff and volunteers.

Learnings and recommendations

Learning Question 4: In what ways has CBP approach improved resilience and fostered a peaceful co-existence of both Rohingya and host communities?

Learning: CBP approach has strengthened networking in the camp

Community networks and relationship building is a core element of community resilience. Networks refer to the connectedness of a community, or “the enduring exchange of relations established between organizations, individuals, and groups”³. Networking enables “the attainment of positive network-level outcomes that could not normally be achieved by individual organizational participants acting independently”⁴.

We analysed the effectiveness of Caritas Bangladesh’s networking by asking four key stakeholder groups to rate key network indicators using a Likert scale. Our analysis showed that:

- ◆ networking between Caritas Bangladesh and the community was perceived to be ‘highly effective’. For example, in focus group discussion, two thirds of Rohingya participants felt they had very good communication and relationship with Caritas Bangladesh representatives that resulted in better awareness of their protection services in the camps.
- ◆ networking between Caritas Bangladesh and other humanitarian agencies, between Caritas Bangladesh and the different protection committee/groups, and between Caritas Bangladesh and block leaders/ camp Majhi, was perceived to be ‘moderately effective’.

The study team noted that camp level agency representatives are frequently changing over time which hampered networking across and among network members from multiple individuals or organizations. There is further analysis of networking and coordination between different community based protection committees on page 22.

The analysis shows that BFC, WFS and CFS initiatives are effectively engaging and involving community members. However, there are still some challenges to further strengthen networking and to deepen community engagement and ownership. These

processes require additional investment of time, effort, experimentation and learning of strategies, and are key to increasing the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the initiatives.

Recommendation: That Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies explore strategies to continue strengthening community networking over time.

Learning: CBP complaint mechanisms are helping to resolve disputes and to foster resilience and peaceful coexistence

Over half of camp and host community survey respondents perceived the existing CBP complaint mechanism process to have some effectiveness for resolving disputes and fostering a more peaceful coexistence compared to two years ago. Almost two thirds indicated that the existing complaint resolution mechanism has contributed ‘moderately’ towards improving resilience as well as fostering a peaceful coexistence.

Learning: CBP has promoted inclusivity however some challenges still remain

One of the key characteristics of the CFS, WFS and BFC and the community involvement is that Caritas Bangladesh has strongly worked towards inclusivity of all people, including men, women, boys, girls and people living with a disability and those who are chronically unwell. The CBP has played an important role through interventions in awareness-raising, teaching, creating safe spaces for social interactions and promoting peaceful relationships.

All children and the women and adolescent girls from all backgrounds are welcome at the CFS and WFS. They appear relaxed and happy at the centre and accepted by everyone. The parents interviewed for this research all noted this acceptance of all children and appreciated it. They also emphasised the role the centre played in their children’s education.

However, inclusivity has not been without its challenges. For example, the survey results highlighted a gap in adolescent girls attending the WFS.

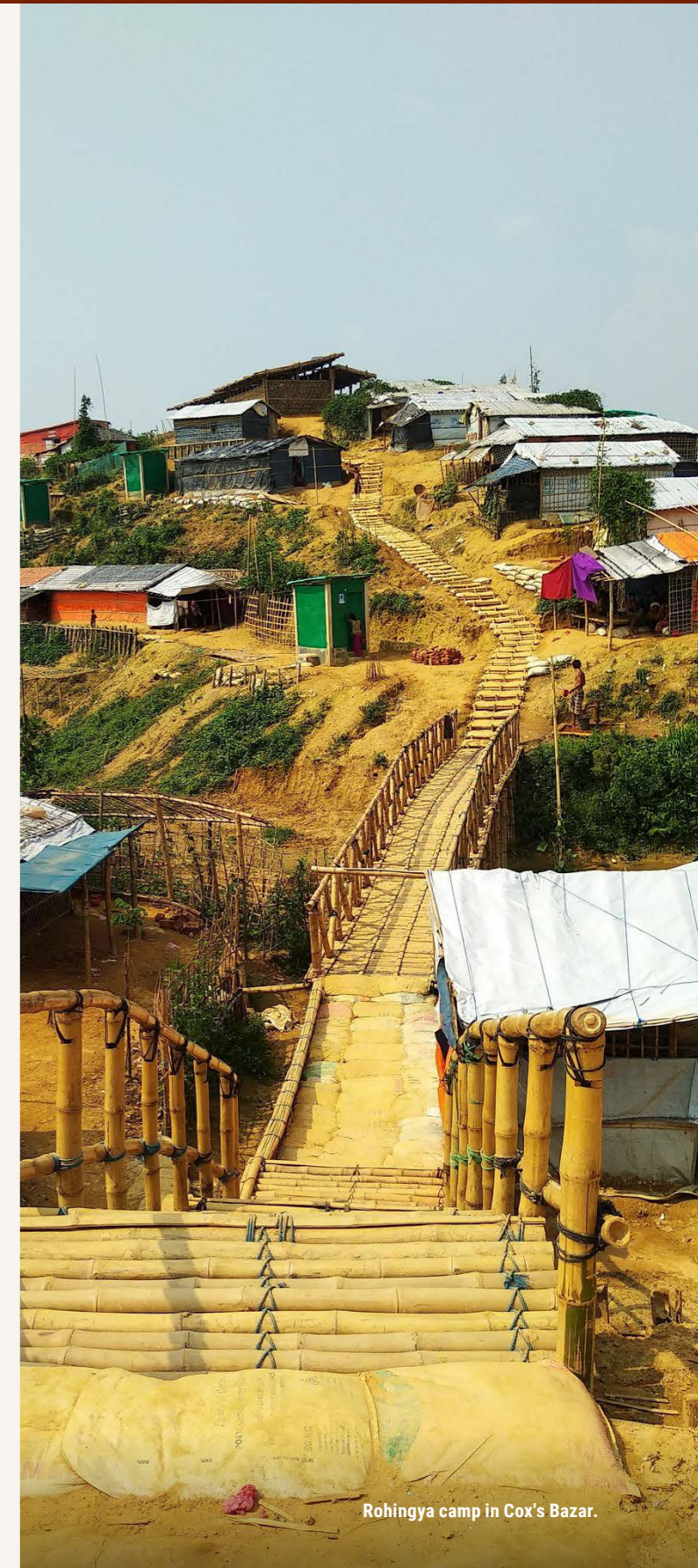
The volunteers, advisory committee, and management committee members of the WFS worked proactively to encourage community members to attend the WFS and CFS, for example during house visits.

One of the CBP Advisory committee members said during the focus group discussion: “the parents believe when a girl is 14 she must stay home and women are also not allowed to go outside the shelter. This is why it was so difficult for women and adolescent girls to come to the WFS. But they worked with the committees and tried to sensitise and make them aware. Now they are receiving a lot of women and girls in the centre.”

Male group and camp leaders reported during focus group discussions that ‘our wives and mothers and sisters have never talked to a man face to face before, and the men in the family were also a hindrance to allowing them to go outside of the shelter to talk to unknown males. But now they come out from the house and talk with the humanitarian agencies representatives, visiting the resource/community centers. This is only because of Caritas efforts on community awareness, mobilization and providing protection services including psychosocial counselling, peacebuilding and resilience’.

These approaches to inclusivity in these WFS and CFS where protection concerns and tensions are present, and the provision of psychosocial counselling and awareness sessions, played a significant role to foster changes in the broader social context, especially in the area of peacebuilding and resilience.

Recommendation: That Caritas Bangladesh strengthens strategic participation of the camp and host communities in CBP programming and program design, to ensure an approach based on their own cultures, practices, and beliefs to enhance inclusivity including for different age groups and gender.



Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar.

Learnings and recommendations

Learning Question 5: How can the CBP program be expanded, made long-term sustainable and more effective?

Learning: Community members are volunteers and beneficiaries of the CBP programs; however there is opportunity to increase community leadership of the programs.

BFC, WFS and CFS make their greatest contributions when they are implemented in a manner that supports community mobilization and engagement.

This study used a typology developed by the ILI to demonstrate the level of community engagement of the CBP initiatives. Table 1 shows how the BFC, WFS and CFS projects were rated by different stakeholders against four different levels of engaging with communities. The stakeholders included community members, project staff, block leader/camp Majhi, and the research team.

Table 1: Typology of approaches for engaging communities – results for BFC, WFS and CFS

Category	Community engagement score		
	BFC	WFS	CFS
1. Direct implementation by agency: the agency is a service provider: community members are the beneficiaries	Low	Low	Low
2. Community involvement in agency initiative: the agency is a promoter of its own initiative, a planner and a trainer and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries	High	Low to Moderate	Moderate
3. Community owned and managed activities mobilized by external agency: the agency is a catalyst, capacity builders, a facilitator of linkages, and a funder after community ownership has developed. The community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors and also beneficiaries.	Low to Moderate	Very low	Low
4. Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community: the agency is a capacity builder and funder, and community members are also beneficiaries	Very low	Very low	Very low

The analysis shows that the BFC, WFS and CFS programs align with Category 2 of this typology, where community members are volunteers and beneficiaries. There is room to consider how to increase the level of community ownership to Category 3, so that community members are more involved in the planning, implementation and assessment of the programs.

Recommendation: That Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies work with the camp and host communities to explore opportunities and strategies to strengthen community engagement, participation and ownership of the CBP initiatives to enhance long-term sustainability of the CBP approach.



Learning COVID-19 hygiene in a Child Friendly Space.

An example of community engagement in a Child Friendly Space

While the CFS was being built, Caritas Bangladesh’s community mobilising staff engaged with respective camp Majhis and block leaders, held community meetings and explained the purpose of the CFS, emphasising that the CFS belonged to the community. The community was then asked to elect a Centre Management Committee (CMC) comprising men and women. Once the CFS was set up and running, CB also selected a young man and a young woman to become formal members of the CMC and to represent the views of young people.

“Within the CFS, we monitor, organise and gather the children and we talk with them about personal hygiene, that they come here clean and at home, they stay clean. We also play with them. We also gather here and we have a traditional drum and we teach them the dances here. They learn about their home.” - CMC member, Camp 20 extension

Volunteers and teachers from the community come to support and be supported. The CFS recruits volunteers from the community. These volunteers are often young people who had themselves attended the CFS and received support. Caritas Bangladesh staff will often intervene by talking with families to ensure that young people, especially young women, can access volunteering and training opportunities.

Learnings and recommendations

Learning: Women are members of CBP committees, but many need further support to play a stronger leadership role in CBP.

In the camp, the leadership structure is male dominant although some females are also involved in committees. In situations where there are women representatives, their recognition as leaders and their inclusion in leadership structures has led to increased presentation of SGBV issues. Women leaders have played a critical role in providing services to survivors and encouraging survivors to come forward to seek assistance. Women leaders, when trained as awareness campaign promoters or peer counsellors, have acted as a social force raising SGBV issues in the community and ensuring that gender issues are not left aside.

Female focus group participants reported that it is easier to seek protection assistance from a woman from their community than from the professional staff of humanitarian agencies.

There is good representation of women in Caritas Bangladesh's CBP initiatives (including an equal gender balance in the BFC program). However, this study found that in the WFS and CFS committees, while the women are active members of the committees, in general many of the women are not as knowledgeable about their roles or about the response mechanisms for protection concerns. They were not as able to play an effective role in planning and implementation of the activities of the committee.

By project design, the BFC project is expected to build capacity of both male and female volunteers of all age groups uniformly. One of the challenges is that most male volunteers are literate in some language (Burmese, English), while nearly all the female volunteers lack this literacy. Though BFC has achieved and maintains a 50/50 gender balance in case of recruiting BFC volunteers, it can still be challenging to ensure that female volunteers have the same level of power and responsibility as that of male counterparts. If more women from the community can be empowered through capacity building training on protection mechanisms, it can lead to better protection mechanisms for them and a good role model for girls in the community.

Recommendation: That Caritas Bangladesh explores strategies to increase the inclusion of women in functional leadership roles within the committees for the Barefoot Counselling, Women Friendly Spaces and Child Friendly Spaces programs.

Learning: The current structure of community-based protection committee in the camps lacks coordination and contributes to confusion about roles and responsibilities

Currently there are multiple community-based committees in each block, set up by different humanitarian agencies for different objectives. This creates several challenges for the community:

- Each protection/CBP committee is set up and operates differently by different agencies and this has caused confusion. Focus group discussions with CBP committee members and survey results from the community showed that there is a lack of understanding amongst committee members as well as community members on their roles and responsibilities.
- There is limited coordination between CBP committees in the Rohingya camps established by different NGOs, which contributes to confusion about roles and responsibilities.
- There is inadequate coordination between the multiple committees formed by different aid agencies throughout the camps.
- Often just one Mahji, religious leader or community leader is the representative on multiple committees, so they often have competing priorities that hamper their ability to fully represent community matters and to engage and network effectively with Caritas Bangladesh's protection services.

For these reasons, a better model of community-based committees is needed. We recommend the establishment of an experimental model of connected, centralised community-based committees on protection:

- At the block level would be a protection sub-committee made up of community members,

who would organise monthly protection meetings where community members can attend, engage with the committee members and remain informed of services and rights. Under this model, there would be increased visibility of who the sub-committee members are, and the responsibility to respond to protection concerns is shared between committee members instead of just one community leader.

- At the camp level, a single centralised protection committee would provide coordination between the block-level sub-committees. This camp-level protection committee would be made up of representatives from the different block-level sub-committees, and hold meetings attended by members of the sub-committees.

Such a framework could offer better coordination between committees across the camp, as well as a more effective mechanism for affected members of the community to access protection services. It could also strengthen community leadership towards resolving the most sensitive cases or linking with law enforcement agencies.

Recommendation: That all relevant stakeholders, including multilateral agencies and international humanitarian organisations, establish an experimental model of connected CBP committees across an entire camp, involving a centralised committee at camp level and sub-committees at block level, with monthly meetings where camp residents can participate and access information and protection services.

Learning: There is insufficient awareness in camp and host communities of their protection rights.

Addressing CBP in a humanitarian setting is complex and challenging. Often the challenges arise when a protection issue occurs and people don't know what their rights are and where to seek help and protection for themselves or their family. In interviews conducted with Rohingya and host communities, camp block leaders and Mahji as part of this study, it showed that there are differing understandings of human and legal rights to protection.

Recommendation: That Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies enhance an integrated human development approach in the delivery of CBP programs to increase accessibility to basic services. Potential areas for training include - sensitive case reporting and response to sexual abuse; child protection case management and referrals; protection rights and advocacy to strengthen protection systems in the camps and host communities and how to work with local authorities to prioritise protection mainstreaming.

Learning: Areas for further research to improve effectiveness and sustainability of CBP programs

Based on all the findings from this study, recommended areas for further research include how CBP ensures community wellbeing, looking at subjective, social, community, physical and psychosocial factors; how CBP improves social cohesion; Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) studies on SGBV and CP; and further assessment on each of the BFC, CFS, and WFS initiatives.

Recommendation: That funding partners, Caritas Bangladesh and other implementing agencies provide adequate resourcing required for further research, and assessments on CBP programs to generate new knowledge and learning for further improvement of effectiveness and sustainability of the CBP programs.

Voices from the field



Jamila in Rohingya camp.

Jamila's story

Twenty-two-year-old Jamila is a single mother, living in Cox's Bazar camp. A Rohingya woman, she fled the armed conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State in 2017 to save herself, her elderly mother and eight-month-old baby daughter. "I cannot explain the mental agony of leaving my own country," Jamila says.

After an extremely difficult journey Jamila arrived at a camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh with almost nothing. **"It seemed a totally awful place for me, I was completely overwhelmed"** Jamila says. **"In the early days, it was a bare area, with no life-supporting needs like food, shelter and water."** Having been abandoned by her husband, she was left to care for her daughter and mother herself.

Caritas Bangladesh identified her as 'extremely vulnerable' and provided her with access to emergency food and shelter. Jamila was introduced to the Women Friendly Spaces (WFS) project where she received counselling and emotional support. Jamila also learnt about health and hygiene, participated in a parenting program and learned sewing skills to help her to earn an income.

"For the first time in my life, in the camp, I felt cared for and accepted," Jamila says. **"The facilitators took care of my daughter, so that I could attend classes or take a nap if needed. My worries of an uncertain future are disappearing. It was like a ray of hope that spreads in the dark night, through the light of the Women Friendly Spaces."**

Just as things were looking up in the camp, COVID-19 hit. Without proper sanitation and with water, soap and masks in short supply, it posed a serious threat. Caritas Bangladesh acted quickly to minimise its spread by sharing prevention messages, conducting training sessions, installing hand-washing stations, repairing toilets and distributing soap and masks.

Jamila's participation in the WFS has given her an opportunity to share and engage with other women going through similar experiences. Jamila has now built a sense of community around her and feels more supported. **"I am proud of my potential and strength that was hidden before."** – Jamila.

Hamida's story

Thirty-two-year-old Hamida is a mother of three living in Cox's Bazar. A Rohingya woman, she suffered serious economic hardship when her husband left her to live with his second wife in another camp.

In order to be able to provide for her family, Hamida joined Caritas Bangladesh's CBP program and was trained as a Barefoot Counsellor volunteer. She learnt about gender-based violence, child protection, trafficking, early marriage, counselling, and human rights, among other issues.

The training provided by Caritas Bangladesh improved her knowledge and understanding of social norms, communications, community wellbeing as well as prevention and response to protection concerns and risks.

Living in a male-dominated society, Hamida had to face many cultural challenges as it is not common or socially accepted for women to work outside their homes, especially with male colleagues. However her determination as well as her skills in community outreach have helped her overcome these difficulties.

Her journey has not been easy, but the BFC program has given her the foundation to improve her family life and contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious community:

"I've learnt how to manage conflict in a non-violent way, treating people with respect and dignity. I can now support people with different needs, and help to prevent and respond to protection issues in the community." – Hamida



Hamida in Rohingya camp.

