

Brushstrokes of Hope

"In Myanmar, I used to play with clay and draw pictures on paper. But in the refugee camp, I lost all interest in the things I loved. Attending the SAFE session gave me strategies to cope with these challenges and reignited my dreams of becoming an artist."- Habzu, 13

In the sprawling Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where despair and uncertainty lurk, a touch of hope finds its way into the life of 13-year-old Habzu Rahman. Within these makeshift shelters, a beacon of light emerges as Habzu embarks on a transformative journey, guided by his passion for art and the unwavering support of the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Habzu vividly recalls the fateful day in 2017 when he and his family fled their burning home in Myanmar.

The haunting memories still visit him in the form of nightmares, leaving him burdened by the weight of his past. As adolescence brings constant changes to his body and mind, he struggles to articulate his challenges to others.

Amidst this emotional turmoil, fate leads Habzu to join the IRC-supported adolescent program known as Supporting Adolescents and their Families in Emergency (SAFE). This program becomes a lifeline for Habzu, equipping him with the tools to navigate the treacherous waters of adolescence. SAFE's carefully curated sessions provide a safe place for adolescent boys and girls, fostering connections and offering positive coping strategies.

Within the SAFE sessions, Habzu discovers that he is not alone. He finds a community of individuals grappling with similar challenges, united by their dreams and aspirations. Blessed to be part of SAFE, Habzu's fading dreams are reignited, even as he recognizes the limitations within the camp that hinder his artistic talents from flourishing.

Through the SAFE sessions, Habzu learns how to confront his challenges positively. Notably, Habzu's parents also participate in the SAFE caregiver sessions, gaining a deeper understanding of their son's feelings and the challenges he faces.

This newfound comprehension fosters a positive relationship between Habzu and his parents, bridging the gap that once hindered open communication about sensitive issues. Habzu's paintings adorn the walls of the Safe Healing and Learning Space (SHLS), earning admiration from all who see them. Encouraged by his peers and teachers, Habzu gains the confidence to share his darkest nightmares, finding solace in the unwavering support of his SAFE mentor.

Habzu's story reminds us of the indomitable spirit residing within the hearts of vulnerable children and the incredible impact that a nurturing and supportive environment can have on their lives.



***Habzu nurturing his talent in SHLS center
Photo Credit: Rovaiya Sultana- Manager- CPYD***

A 'Skilled' Future



Rejwan in SHLS

photo credit: Asma-UI-Husna - Manager

16 year old Rohingya refugee Rejwan used to roam around the camp with no purpose of life, now he earns and supports his family.

Rejwan left behind his friends and relatives and had to adapt to a new life in the refugee camp. With 11 family members in a small shelter, life in the camp had been tough for Rejwan and his family. He was always traumatized and hopeless as he had no freedom, scope of education or skill development to be competent and contribute to his family and community.

Despite the challenges he faced, Rejwan's life changed for the better when he started IRC's signature and evidence based global program "Learn to Earn" which has been implemented successfully in different emergency situation in the world. "Learn to Earn" program focuses on equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to generate income and become economically self-reliant.

He learned Entrepreneurship skills including identifying business opportunities, developing a business idea, manage their personal and business finance like budgeting, saving, financial planning, and basic accounting.



Rejwan applying his skill of Repairing gas Stoves in community

photo credit: Asma-UI-Husna - Manager



Rejwan making net at home

photo credit: Asma-UI-Husna - Manager

He also learned Business management such as marketing, sales, customer service, inventory management, how to develop practical skills that can be utilized to generate income, find innovative solutions to business-related issues.

Later, he received training on repairing solar systems, gas stoves, and net making provided by IRC according to skill development framework of Govt..

Through his newly acquired skills in solar system and gas stove repairing, and net making, Rejwan is now able to earn money by providing service within the camp and support his family. Rejwan's family and community people are very happy to see this change in Rejwan.

Now Rejwan wants to start his own business and share the skills and knowledge he has gained through the "Learn to Lead" and "Learn to Earn" sessions.

Building Resilience: Empowering Rohingya Children's Emotional Growth

As any regular child, Ruma wanted to be heard and loved. But life in the refugee camp can be tough, especially for a household of six.

Her parents were always busy with their daily tasks. Ruma's father spends all day outside the house, fails to assist her mother with household chores, often scolding her for trivial matters. Being the youngest family member, Ruma's opinions are often overlooked, making her feel neglected and eroding her self-confidence. Consequently, she exhibits aggression and a short temper due to toxic stress. Ruma is not alone in experiencing such neglect, as 21% of children have been identified as neglected children based on data from the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) in April 2023.

In 2022, Ruma was enrolled in an Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) session conducted by the IRC. She gradually adapted to a routine life and interacting with 20 other participants.

Through these sessions, she learned to understand others' feelings, techniques for making friends, and effective communication with both family members and aid workers. Ruma responded positively to the "self-talk for success" session, although she encountered challenges in terms of family support.



Ruma's happy smiley face at SHLS
Photo Credit: Rovaiya Sultana- Manager -CPYD

"I have learned techniques for anger management after attending SEL sessions." -Ruma

Initially, she was labeled as having an aggressive attitude, and her peers avoided playing with her. However, this changed after she joined the SEL session.

With the support of the IRC's SEL program, Ruma managed to overcome her difficulties in making friends. She acquired techniques like deep breathing and counting in reverse to control her anger and stress.

Ruma emphasized that numerous children in the camp share similar challenges and require the kind of support provided by SEL sessions. Their participation in such programs is crucial to help them overcome their difficulties and develop the skills needed to thrive.

Ruma is not alone in experiencing such neglect, as 21% of children have been identified as neglected children based on data from the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) in April 2023.

Breaking Barriers: Empowering Rohingya Girls through Leadership

Umme Habiba, a 16-year-old girl living in the Rohingya camp 1E in Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh. Umme Habiba was struggling in her life with different problems, and she believed that life was very dangerous.

She felt helpless and unable to handle the difficulties that she faced. Umme Habiba faced several challenges that are almost common among girls in her community. These challenges included limited access to education, lack of opportunities to develop essential skills like problem-solving, decision making and leadership, lack of participation. In addition, she was upset with negative attitudes towards girls and women in her community, which made it difficult for her to pursue her goals and aspirations.

Umme Habiba's life took a positive turn when she enrolled in the "Learn to Lead" program organized by AGRAJATTRA with the technical support of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Initially reserved and uncomfortable with her peers, Umme gradually transformed through the program's sessions focused on leadership, team-building, communication, and problem-solving skills. She gained confidence, became more outgoing, and actively participated in community

"I have learned how to overcome the challenges we naturally face in life. I want to build a network for girls that can provide me with new opportunities in the future to combat child marriage and violence against girls and women." Umme Habiba, 16

Through the Learn to Lead program. The program taught her essential skills like problem-solving, communication, and leadership, which helped her become more confident and empowered. Through the program, she learned how to identify and define problems, brainstorm alternatives, evaluate solutions, and make decisions that would improve her life and the lives of those around her.

Additionally, the program helped her develop positive attitudes towards herself and others, which allowed her to build better relationships with her family, friends, and community members. The program had a profound impact on Umme's behavior and attitude. She began contributing her ideas and using the six-point problem-solving approach to help others in the community. Her new-found skills and confidence led her to take on new challenges, including participating in conflict resolution and assisting her family with problem-solving and decision-making.

Umme's transformation was remarkable. The "Learn to Lead" program helped her overcome social and cultural barriers, empowering her to become a confident and active member of her community. Her family and community members now seek her assistance in problem-solving and decision-making, valuing her contributions.

The facilitator of the program played a crucial role in encouraging Umme and her initially reluctant family to participate. The facilitator raised awareness about the program's benefits and worked closely with families to address their concerns and barriers to participation.

By learning problem-solving techniques and developing her leadership abilities, Umme Habiba feels more empowered to make positive changes in the life of adolescent girls her community.



Umme Habiba – creating awareness among other girls in her community
Photo Credit: Ankhi Akther
– CPYD officer- Agrajattra