

PROJECT INCEPTION MEETINGS

IMPROVING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG ROHINGYA AND HOST COMMUNITY PROJECT

Short Report of the Four Union Based
Inception Meetings



In Collaboration
with



IMPROVING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG ROHINGYA AND HOST COMMUNITY

BACKGROUND

Last year's surge of Rohingya impacted massively on the host communities of Cox's Bazar District. With a population of 2.3 Million it is one of Bangladesh's poorest, most vulnerable and yet most neglected districts, with 33% of the population living below the poverty (as opposed to 18% national average) and 17% below the extreme poverty line (12% national average). The local population of Teknaf and Ukhiya (together some 400,000 residents) in the vicinity of Kutupalong and Nayapara refugee camps were compassionate and open-handed first responders to the influx but have since complained about increased living costs (market, transport), congested roads, abuse of water, congested irrigation channels and drainage systems, undercut wages for day labor, massive deforestation because of fire wood needs and a general sensation of profound neglect compared to the refugee sites absorbing all attention and aid. While most of the complaints bear factual validity, they are also part of a populist discourse reproaching international agencies as "vampire NGOs" and Rohingya as bearers of disease (diphtheria) and crime (trafficking of drugs and young women).

THE PROJECT

The project seeks to improve peaceful coexistence and social cohesion among Rohingya and Host communities in Palongkhali, Raza Palong, Whykong, Hnila union of Ukhiya and Teknaf. The project works reach to 6320 Rohingya beneficiaries and 22692 Host community people directly. The peaceful coexistence improving project shall implement advocacy and sensitization interventions in Cox's Bazar district and at the National level by engaging stakeholders and policy makers including Government, UN, INGOs, NGOs, CBOs and Local government representatives.

Objectives and Intended Impacts:

Objectives

- To foster social cohesion involving both the host and Rohingya community.
- To promote Refugee Rights through advocacy and campaigns.

Intended Impacts:

- Contributed in creating an environment of peaceful coexistence between host and Rohingya community.
- Stakeholders sensitized on the Refugee rights and their accessibility.

The Inception meeting

The project activities have been kicked off with the inception meeting. The main objective of the inception meeting was to inform key stakeholders about the project, to collect their suggestions and seeking their supports in implementing the project activities.

COAST arranged four inception meetings in four unions (Palongkhali, Rajapalong, Whykong and Hnila) of Teknaf and Ukhiya. In an average 50 local stakeholders with different classes, professions and backgrounds including religious leaders, Union Parishad Chairmen and Members, teachers, journalists and social workers participated in the events. About 16% of the total participants were female and 84% were male.

All the inception meeting usually were started with introductory briefing from the Project Coordinator Zahangir Alam. According to the briefing the project is



covering eight Rohingya camps, four unions in Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas under Cox's Bazar district. The project will organize educational institutions, camps level, union level and Upazila level awareness session on peaceful coexistence, human dignity, human rights and refugee rights. It will also distribute gaming materials among the 25 educational institutions,

various sports and cultural events; extempore speech competitions will also be organized. The project will form 4 union based social cohesion promotion committees incorporating 5 members in each committee. These committees will visit camps to see the real situation and will share the finding with host communities. Findings will also be shared with Camp-In-Charges

(CIC) with some recommendation through UNO offices and DC offices. The project will provide training to twenty five journalists on reporting human rights and refugee issues. The project will give award three persons recognizing their contribution in Rohingya response, specially in ensuring peaceful coexistence.

The First Meeting

*Thangkhali Dakhil Madrasas hall room,
Palongkhali union, Ukhiya
09 May 2019.*

Key Guests: Mojaffor Ahmad, Panel Chairman of Palongkhali union, Rehana Begum, Member of Palongkhali union, Sabuj Sen, Head Teacher of Balukhali kashemia High School, Komor Uddin Mukul, General Secretary of Ukhiya Press Club, Abul Ala Helali, Social Worker and Zahangir Alam, Project Coordinator, IPC Project.

Mozaffor Ahmad, Panel Chairman: The term 'co-existence' is very useful at this moment, because peaceful coexistence among host and Rohingya community is much needed. I would like to thank COAST Trust and UNHCR for taking such initiative



to promote the peaceful co-existence.

Participants mainly urged to do something for local people, they suggested to improve school, college, roads and culvert facilities.

The Second Meeting

*Hnila Union Parisad,
15 May 2019*



Speakers: Jahangir Alam, PC of IPC Project, Abul Hossen, Acting Chairman of Hnila, Faridul Alam, Principle of Jameya Darul Quran Senior Madrasa, Nozrul Islam, President of Community Police Forum, Hnila Union, Mostak Ahmed, Assistant Head Master of Leda High School, Marjina Akter, Mamber of Leda Union, Seikh Foridul Alam, Secretary of Hnila Union, Abdur Rahman Hasemi, Social Worker

Chief guest Abul Hossen, Acting Chairman of Hnila, gave some example of suffering of the host communities due to the Rohingya influx. He blamed Rohingya people for their own suffering. Rohingya people are involved with criminal activities and they are destroying young generation by smuggling Yaba and other drugs'- he said.

Speakers emphasized on rapid repatriation of the Rohingya people, and they suggested government to impose restriction on free movement of Rohingya people. They expected that, project like IPC can reduce their suffering if it could be implemented in a right way and they will assist to create peaceful society.



The Third Meeting

*Kanjorpara High School, Ukhiya
16 May 2019*

Speakers: Zahangir Alam, PC of IPC Project, Mr. Jalal Ahmed, Panel Chairman of Whykong, Ropan Borura, Head Teacher of Nayapara High School, Rafikul Islam, Head Teacher of Kanjorpara High School, Imam Khair, News Editor of coxsbazarnews.com, Abdur Rahim, Retired Teacher of Kanjorpara Gvt. Primary School, Abdul Gaffar, UP member of Whykong Union, Shah Alam, UP member of Whykong Union, Zahidul Islam, UP member of Whykong Union

Chief guest, Mr. Jalal Ahmed: I am pleased to see the plan of the project, but we need to keep in our mind that, planning is easy but implementation is not that easy. At the beginning of Rohingya surge, we were asked from Deputy Commissioner



office to protect our area from trespass of Rohingya. Later, considering the humanitarian crisis, our Prime Minister asked everyone to support them. Again, we were called and requested to give them shelter and help them as much as we can. I think, we should impose restriction on Rohingya movement.

The Fourth Meeting

Ukhiya govt. Model Primary School, Rajapalong union, Ukhiya, 18 May 2019



Speakers: Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Chairman of Rajapalong UP, Md. Harunur Rashid, Head Teacher of Ukhiya Model Govt. Primary School, Moderator, Khurshida Begum, UP Member of Rajapalong UP, Fazlul Haque, Principle of Ukhiya Degree College, Muzibul Alam, Lecturer of Bangomata fajilatunnessa mujib women madrasa, Noor Mohammad Sikdar, president of SUJON and Journalist of Alokito Ukhiya and Moulobi Zafor Alam, Supervisor of Islamic foundation, Ukhiya branch.

Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, Chairman of Rajapalong UP: Rohingyas were helpless, honorable prime minister Sheikh Hasina and

we altogether stood by them but now, seems they have become violent and troublesome. So, by conducting awareness session in camps we need to bring back discipline in their mind and in attitude.

Speakers expressed their affection, love and support to Rohingya people. They were also a bit frustrated with Rohingya for increasing number of violence and crimes within camps. They alleged that, even though local people were the first responders to the Rohingya crisis, Rohingya people are not grateful to them rather they are engaging in quarrel with local people even in simple matter. One of the speakers requested not to appoint student in any NGOs and INGOs



Challenges:

- Most of the host community people now have negative mindset about Rohingya community.
- They think they are the worst sufferer for the Rohingya influx in their place.
- They have negative conception also on NGO activities, they think NGOs are trying to delay the repatriation process of Rohingya people
- They think IPC Project is only awareness raising project, host community can't get anything visible from this project.
- Some of them consider this project as mysterious project and an endeavor to delay the repatriation.
- They wish to have compensation for their grabbed land and for other losses from the govt. and donors.

Learning

- Good relationship with the host communities has helped us in conducting inception meetings successfully.
- We need to keep this on and should initiate to have more interaction with local stakeholders for our future easy access in project areas.
- For easy accessibility to them it is better to give presentation in local Chittagonian language.
- We have to convince them that, school going adolescent boys and girls can learn many important information on human rights, refugee rights, human dignity and peaceful
- We need to share information about activities regularly with the host communities.

The inception meetings have helped us to know the thinking, feelings and positions of the host communities regarding the Rohingya influx. This information will help us a lot in designing our project implanting strategies

