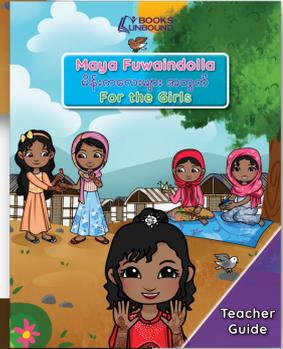


Understanding Communities: *Why Contextualization Matters*



For the Girls Program *Case Study & Impact Report*

Community: Rohingya
Location: Kutupalong, Bangladesh
Reporting Period: August–November 2022

For the Girls: Program Overview



“Do you have a book with girls that look like us?”

By girls, for girls. Our team of female artists from around the world designed this book for Rohingya adolescent girls. *For the Girls* Program was a dream project that became a reality in early 2021. We wanted to provide a resource to prompt important conversations for marginalized girls regarding women’s health, physical activity, and community-based work throughout all phases of life. Our approach is to create a program with universal topics, but present it in a highly contextualized manner for each community.

Methodology

Creating Resilient Education Opportunities

This book introduces female-sensitive conversations, promotes healthy lifestyle changes, and encourages informal methods of learning when school isn’t an option. This was especially important during the months of lockdown due to the COVID pandemic. This program also provides employment and training for aspiring Rohingya female teachers in Kutupalong.

Employing Picture-Based Resources In Discussion Groups

Along with basic health practices, the book encourages creativity, innovation, and community-based work throughout all phases of life. The picture-based approach is designed to encourage girls to ask questions and spark conversation among their peers, regardless of their literacy level.

Contextualization

Because Rohingya is an unwritten language, we collaborate with linguists and translators to create a written form of their Rohingya language. We go through a verification process to ensure that the vocabulary used is the most-widely understood for the focus community.

About the Study

This report is a combination of survey data collected from 3 classes, each with 20 students, conducted in Kutupalong, Bangladesh. Sessions lasted 2 - 2.5 hours, with each class completing 24 sessions over the course of one month. Sessions were taught by a trusted female community leader in Rohingya language utilizing Books Unbound’s *Girls’ Book* with activities from the accompanying *Teacher’s Guide*. Each student received a student book, notebook, pen, drawing supplies, and a healthy snack. At the final session, students were awarded a certificate of completion. Students were informed about the purpose of this study and signed a consent form.

Education & Learning



Physical Wellbeing



Psychosocial Wellbeing



Hygiene & Health



Language & Culture



Program Benefits



About the Students

Birthplace



100%

of students were born in the
Kutupalong camps in
Bangladesh

Average Age



15
years old

Ages ranged
from 12-18

Siblings

Students had an average of...



2.42 Sisters



2.10 Brothers

Location: Kutupalong, Bangladesh

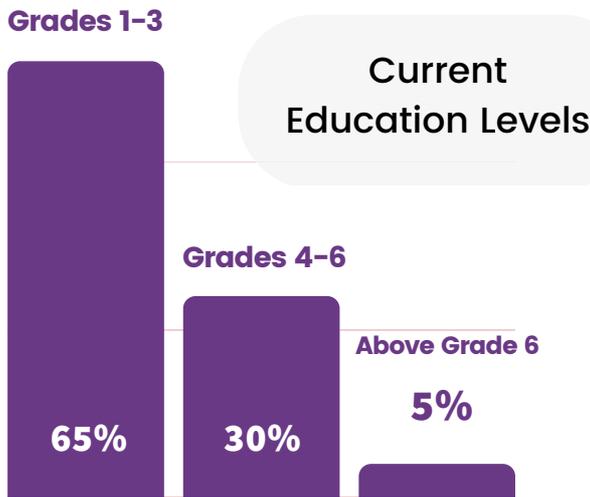
When asked what life is like for Rohingya adolescent girls in the refugee camps, students shared that they are often dependent on their families during this time. They mentioned that...

- Some girls have the opportunity to go to school
- Some girls get married in their teenage years
- Some girls tailor or study at home
- Most girls stay at home and cook, do housework, or care for family members





All educational data was collected at the initial program session.

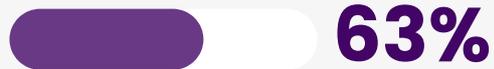


Learning Materials at Home



60% of Rohingya girls in the class have learning materials they use an average of 2.75 times a week at home.

Study Habits



63% study with other girls their age in the camps.

How many girls are currently in school?

(Classrooms, school, in-home school)



Parental Perceptions of Education Matter

"Only a few girls do study who have ability and whose parents understand the importance of education."

-Rohingya Teacher

Why don't all girls attend school?



1. Lack of opportunity for higher education
2. Perceptions of ill-equipped teachers
3. Lack of awareness of alternative options
4. Not allowed to attend school after starting their period
5. Do not want to be in a classroom with boys

"This is the first time I enjoyed my class a lot. Because when we studied anywhere there was girls and boys together and teacher was male as well. So, I didn't feel comfortable and that's why my parents stopped me from going to school. And I see this book is only for girls was provided by Books Unbound." - Rohingya Student

Overall Findings

While the majority of girls have not completed school past grades 1-3 in formal education, there seems to be an eagerness for alternative avenues for learning (at home, with friends, or in community centers). Many girls have materials at home and study collectively, revealing their capacity and potential for education despite delivery disruptions or familial barriers.

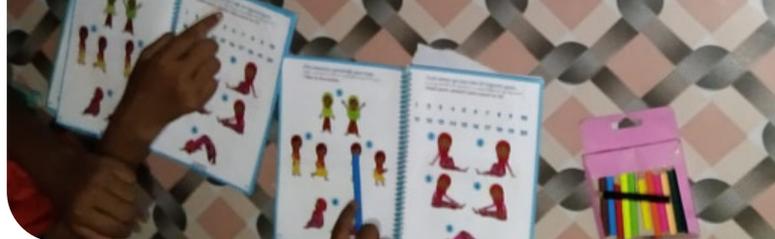


Innovative Education

Girls shared their other learning methods:

- "I have books. I study it in the evening."
- "I do self study and my father help me."
- "Every day I study at home."
- "I go to school every day and community center and study at home."
- "I study at home what my teacher ask me to learn."

Physical Wellbeing



Common misconceptions around physical activity discussed throughout the program:



- "I thought only boys can do exercise and didn't know the importance of exercise."
- "We thought we can do exercise only at jogging center."
- Some students thought that if they do exercise, their body will be in pain.
- Some students didn't know that playing is a form of physical activity/exercise.

Favorite Types of Physical Activity...

Girls mostly enjoyed collective forms of exercise

Sports



Running or walking



Jump Rope



One activity girls learned in the program and loved:

Yoga



We discovered a notable excitement about integrating physical activity into daily life as well as teaching other community members about it.

"From today I would like to do exercise and I will share it with my friends and family members. I would like to learn more exercise which I can do easily at house as we don't enough place and any specific place like others." -Rohingya student

At the start of the program, 60% of girls shared that they didn't do much physical activity and were interested in learning more. By the end of the program, there was an increase in weekly physical activity as girls learned more about its various forms.

Before

1.8



After

6.6

of times per week engaging in physical activity



Nutrition



Food Access Concerns

When learning about nutrition during the program, students raised important questions and concerns regarding food access in the camps. Many girls commented that their families do not have the option to choose their food as they lack a source of income and therefore eat what the food programs in the camps provide.

Students reported rations of rice, potatoes, lentils, dry fish, and spices from food programs, noting a lack of vegetables, meat, and fruits. There are alternative means of buying or trading food in the camps, but these actions are not easily accessible. Hopefully, this program will equip girls for personal informed choices when there is an opportunity while simultaneously providing nutrition information to be potentially transmitted to family members.

Reported Options





Social Support: BEFORE

At the beginning of the program, girls were asked if they currently had anyone in their life to talk with when going through something difficult.

63%

*"My friend is very faithful and free with me."
"My elder sister. I share everything with her."*
-Student Responses

Said Yes

*"I don't feel comfortable to share my problems to anyone."
"Here's no place or no one to express girls feeling."
"If I share my problem then I get punishment. I don't share with anyone."* -Student Responses

37%

Said No

3.5

Girls also reported seeing their friends 3.5 times a week playing outside, in private homes, at school or community centers.

Social Support: After

The majority of students reported feeling "supported" or "very supported" by other girls in this program.

83%

said it is **very likely** they would talk with one of their classmates if they were going through something difficult.

New Friends

When talking about their new friendships from the program, students said...

*"As I see my friends every day in this program I miss them if I don't see."
"I want to see everyone every day."
"On weekends I want to see my friends."
"I like my Friend and feel comfortable to share with them."* - Student Responses

100%

of students reported making new friends in the program!

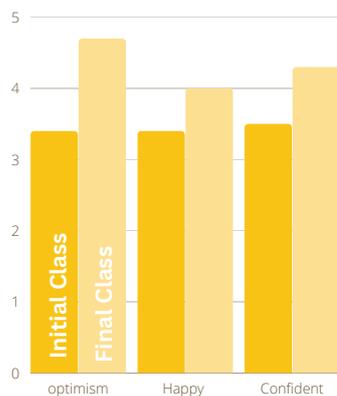


Emotions

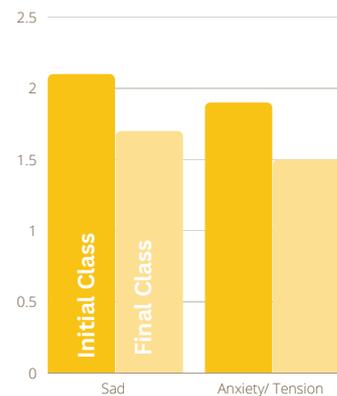
From the beginning to the end of the program, we found an...



Increase in positive emotions



Decrease in negative emotions



***Tension or "tenshan":** A word often used in the Rohingya community depicting stress, discomfort, uneasiness or anxiety.

Overall Findings

1

Many girls already had healthy relationships providing emotional support through difficult times. These women included mothers, sisters, friends, aunts, and neighbors.

2

The program expanded the students' web of supportive relationships. Friendship emerged as a significant factor of wellbeing for Rohingya adolescent girls.

3

Peer conversations and discussions on womanhood strengthened relational bonds, empowering girls and increasing positive emotions.



Beginning Menstruation

From our community teacher:

"Some students said that when they had first period they were so scared about it. They thought something went wrong with them and didn't share with anyone and didn't know what should do. So, was just staying inside the house and didn't talk to anyone even with mother."

Accounts from our students:

"My period started few months ago. Before my period I didn't have idea about it. So, I was thinking and was scared and shy to share with anyone. I didn't know using of pad. I was changing dress to hide it but it doesn't work so, I was sleeping the whole day saying I was sick. I thought it was a serious disease. At last my mom recognized it after one day. Then she told me about it. But I was feeling so shy hearing about it from mom. And she didn't let me eat fish and some food for some days. So, I think every girl should know about periods prior their first period and using of pad. I hope Books Unbound will support all the girls to get this program."

"I had my first period just few months ago. I was so scared seeing my physical condition as I didn't have any idea of it. I thought I had any disease and I couldn't share with anyone. At last, one of my friends came to see me who was educated and knows about periods. She helped me. So, I think this topic is very important to all the Rohingya girls. Through the support of Books Unbound we so many Rohingya girls changed and gained lots of knowledge which is new to us. I would request to continue this program."

Hygiene and Pads

Concerns from our community teacher:

"Our students who didn't have start their period yet they didn't know using of pad and who have they don't know proper way to maintain hygiene. Because they through it to the dustbin or don't make those dry under the sun."

Health Awareness and Empowerment

Three other topics surfaced about which students knew very little or had no prior knowledge. Some had not learned of **menopause** and believed that seniors still have their periods and choose to stop having babies. After learning about the symptoms of **Urinary Tract Infections**, girls said they believe many women in their community have suffered from this. They said this helps them understand more reasons why it is important to maintain hygiene.

Some girls reported learning about **miscarriages** and the stages of pregnancy for the first time.

Menstruation

The narrative data we collected revealed menstruation as one of the most crucial topics covered in the program. Read about what Rohingya girls say about their experiences of beginning menstruation, navigating hygiene and pads, and overcoming misconceptions around menstruation in their communities in a refugee camp context.

Concerns from our students:

"One most important thing to share is, in our camp as we live so many people together and we don't have enough space to dry our clothes it's a great challenge for the girls. Not only menstrual pads in camp the girls and women clothes can't dry under the sun as we don't have any place in one side. If we do then people mind it. So, in camp we are facing this problem"

"Our senior [elderly women in the community] doesn't help in making and using menstrual pads. They are shy about it."

"Some girls don't take a bath until pass the period time as don't have chance to dry it."

Menstruation Misconceptions

Insights from our community teacher:

"The girls did not know that all the girls are same and foreign girl has period, they thought it happens only with the Muslim girl."

"Students thought that all the adolescent should stay inside the house after their first period. They thought this is the common essential of Adolescence."

"It's important to know that most of our community think that during the first period they can't eat food normally, means should avoid some food. So, this is very important to know every girl."

Main Menstruation Takeaways

Rohingya girls were eager to be educated on their menstrual cycle. Many learned about menstruation after it began, causing stress and leading to poor hygiene. Washing and drying menstrual pads remains a consistent challenge due to camp congestion and cultural norms. Peer-to-peer education is a powerful tool to spread critical health information while opening dialogue on misconceptions around nutrition and leaving the home during menstruation.

"Today, I learnt very important things that we all female should know. Miscarriage, growing of baby and what senior like and can do. I think if we know this everything from our childhood we can change our lives and help our Community."- Rohingya student

"Today, I could realize how to maintain hygiene. Really it's so much important topics for the girls specially for my community. Every girl should know and get this program. Otherwise, I think our community can't empower and stay healthy and safe. Thanking from the core of my heart to Books Unbound for your kind support" - Rohingya student



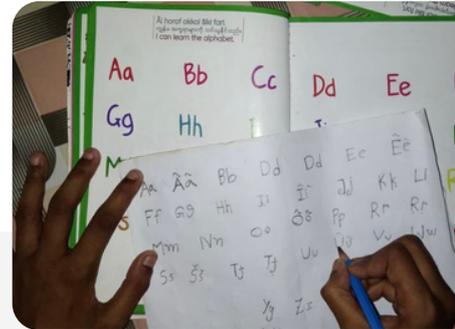
Rohingya has been a primarily oral language until recent efforts to preserve it in written form. This is an important moment for the Rohingya people as their language, now being written, could enable a higher degree of linguistic preservation and increased literacy rates. Many of the girls had not seen their mother tongue or culture represented in a book before. Books Unbound's **For the Girls** book includes Rohingya, Burmese, and English. Here were some of the students' impressions:

“I didn't know that Rohingya has own language and thought it's a mixed language. Today, I am so Happy learning the Rohingya Alphabet. I want to teach it to other. And I think every Rohingya should know it.”

“Most importantly I learnt Rohingya Alphabet, my mother language. I didn't know that our language can write. I would like to learn more about Rohingya Language and teach to my community. My community will be very happy and helpful learning the Rohingya Language.”

“Yes, as I didn't see anywhere Rohingya language it made me feel like our language and culture is also important.”

“This is the first time I saw Rohingya Alphabet and language written.”



Why Contextualization Matters

We asked students how the **For the Girls** book compares to their learning materials at home. Girls emphasized that this book was easy to understand and user-friendly, noting the colorful cartoons. The Rohingya language made the book unique from any they had seen before. Students reported using the learning materials they already have at home an average of 2.7 times a week. Girls shared they hope to use the **For the Girls** book with their friends and family around 4.4 times a week. We believe this is due to the rigorous co-creation and feedback process incorporated into our product development. The development process ensures the content, language, and cartoons are specifically tailored to the girls' lived experiences, everyday setting, religious values, language, culture, and traditions. Girls noted religious representation as specifically meaningful to them. More of their impressions below:

- ▶ “Seeing the girls wearing veil in the cartoon I feel happy because some people don't like our religion and culture.”
- ▶ “This book is translated into three language specially in Rohingya so it's easy to read and understand. And it's only for girls and all the topics are very important for the girls. We want more books and program like this.”
- ▶ “Yes, I never saw any book with our Language and culture. I thought our language is not written anywhere. I felt happy to see our culture in this book.”



Survey Question Findings

Our research revealed high levels of awareness and desire to preserve and learn more about Rohingya culture.



When you grow-up, how important is it to you that your children speak the Rohingya language?

Before

4.25/5.0

After

4.75/5.0



How interested are you in understanding and learning more about your culture?

4.4/5.0

4.9/5.0





Breaking Down Educational Barriers

The For the Girls program was meticulously tailored to the refugee camp context and Rohingya cultural background of its students in Kutupalong, Bangladesh. This process allowed the program to address the immediate educational needs by overcoming barriers traditionally keeping girls from learning. Some benefits included...

1 An All-Female Environment

"This is the first time I enjoyed my class a lot. Because when we studied anywhere there was girls and boys together and teacher was male as well. So, I didn't feel comfortable and that's why my parents stopped me from going to school. And I see this book is only for girls was provided by Books Unbound. I like this book very much. Thank you so much to Books Unbound. I learned so many new things from today's topics." -Rohingya student

2 A Credible Communal Network

"This program is so helpful to me. I am not allowed to get out from home. But our teacher is good so I can come here and learn the important things. And thanks to Books Unbound and who are helping to continue this program. I hope all the Rohingya girls will get this training." -Rohingya Student

3 A Private and Trusted Space

"I like the book and program most. I was not allowed to get out from home and study since my period. Now, I feel fortune to get this training. Only coming to her house is allowed for me." -Rohingya Student



Community Spread

Centralized delivery networks of education in refugee camps can often be delayed or vulnerable to disruptions, Books Unbound hopes to instigate a "ripple effect" of education to foster community-driven and informal learning. Here are a few ways we saw this happen...

Educational and Health Content

Class 7 and 8 were comprised of 45 sessions total. At 44 of these sessions, students reported sharing what they learned with friends or family. We believe contextualization helped spark the organic spread of information and education.

Program Enrollment

Students enrolled in the program through word-of-mouth community networks. This included hearing about it from friends who have completed the program and through our community teacher. At the final session, the students shared the names of three girls who would enjoy the program.

100%

Leadership

Of girls shared they would be interested in teaching a For the Girls program in the future. We aim to see organic groups led by former students transmitting the content throughout homes around the camps for hundreds of Rohingya adolescent girls.