

Bridging Communities in Cox's Bazar: Mitigating Risks and Promoting Gender, Governance and Localization of Humanitarian Responses in COVID-19 Era



Project Duration:
36 Months (August 2020 to July 2023)

Project Location:
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Population:
Host community and FDMN community

Funded by:
International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada

Bangladesh hosts the largest refugee population in the world with almost 855,000 Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN) in Cox's Bazar district. A majority of the FDMN community resides in refugee camps situated in Ukha and Teknaf sub-districts (Upazilas) along side an estimated 548, 000 local Bangladeshis in surrounding villages.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is having varying degrees of negative impacts in the FDMN camps and local host communities, including effects on social security, safety, social cohesion, shrinking livelihood opportunities and erosion of dignity and well-being. During periods of emergencies, including pandemics, marginalized groups of women, adolescents (particularly adolescent girls), youth and disabled persons, collectively referred to as most vulnerable groups (MVGs) are further marginalized.

BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health (JPGSPH) and Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ) of BRAC University have collaboratively undertaken a participatory action research to co-create new approaches to promote greater localization of humanitarian interventions. Evidence derived from field work and research will inform the design of specific activities in the context of the current COVID-19 environment. It will also serve as a road map for policymakers in Bangladesh on how to respond to a humanitarian crisis during a pandemic in the future.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

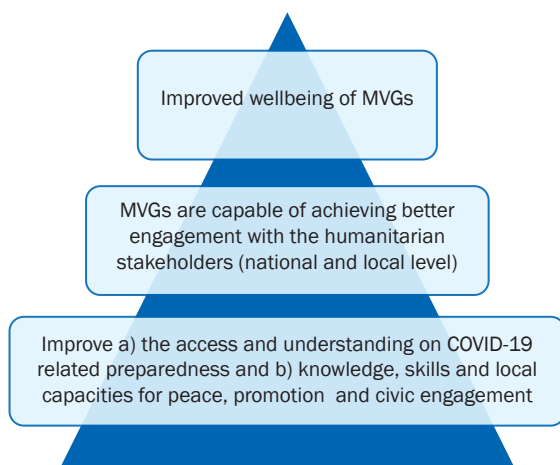
The overall objective of the project is to provide critical evidence to influence policies and interventions that will promote tolerance and peace building, encourage civic engagement and facilitate psycho-social wellbeing within and among the FDMN and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

- 1** To raise awareness and preparedness around the COVID-19 pandemic in FDMN camps and host communities.
- 2** To help mitigate safety and security risks of most vulnerable groups (MVGs) and other vulnerable groups in the post COVID-19 period through the generation of in-depth evidence on the challenges around safety & security, social cohesion, and Psychosocial wellbeing.
- 3** To enhance constructive civic engagement, social cohesion and gender sensitivity among and between the FDMN and host communities in Cox's Bazar
- 4** To widen dissemination of research findings with government representatives, volunteers, CBOs, local NGOs, and UN agencies to share emerging findings and recommendations.



THEORY OF CHANGE

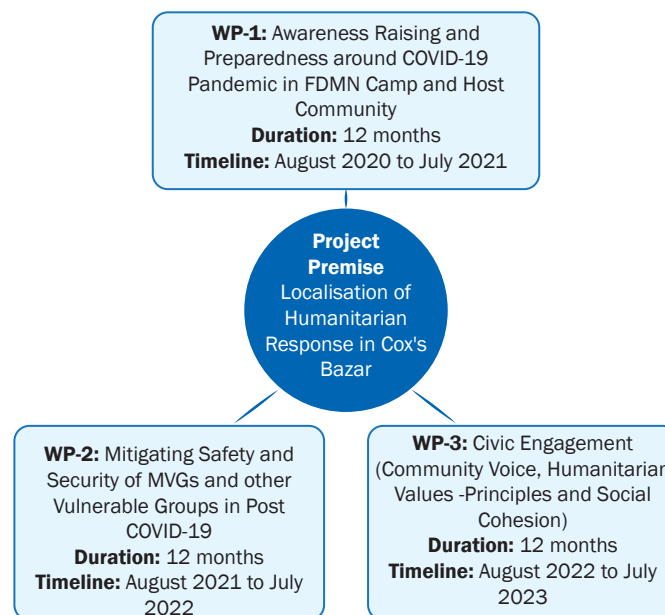
This project will follow a theory of change inspired by the principle of localization (capacity development of local organisations and the voice of affected populations) as articulated below. Improved access and understanding of information on COVID-19-related preparedness and relevant knowledge and skills on promotion of peace, cohesion, and civic engagement will capacitate the MVGs due to better engagement with the humanitarian stakeholders including the public authorities at local (Cox's Bazar) and national level thereby ensuring their improved wellbeing.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

JPGSPH and CPJ of BRAC University are collaboratively implementing this participatory action research. The project will use gender-transformative approaches to mitigate the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on the MVGs of FDMN and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

The project's aforementioned overarching objectives will be achieved by implementing the three separate but strongly inter-connected work packages (WPs). The work packages along with timeframe are as follows:



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Work Package-1 (Year-One): Raise awareness and preparedness around the COVID-19 pandemic in FDMN camps and host communities by undertaking a rapid assessment through survey, qualitative assessments and focused ethnographies with communities; and community outreaches for awareness building, and formulation of key lessons learnt for policy dissemination. A total of 3600 people will be reached directly with the COVID-19 awareness messages under the project.

Work Package-2 (Year-Two): Help mitigate safety and security risks of MVGs and other vulnerable groups in the post COVID-19 period through: generation of in-depth evidence on the challenges, which include: safety & security, social cohesion, and psychosocial well-being faced by women, adolescents and youth and other MVGs in FDMN and host communities. Participatory research methods will be applied to support the processes to empower women and adolescents from FDMN and host communities. A total 3000 community people (women, adolescent and youth, elderly people, camp CSOs, Majhi, Imams and Teachers) will be reached over time by 30 Youth Volunteers (YVs) through Interpersonal Communication (IPC) approaches.

Work Package-3 (Year-Three): Enhance constructive civic engagement, social cohesion and gender sensitivity among and between FDMN and host communities. CPJ will provide civic education and training to community youth and CBOs and facilitate civic engagement initiatives and local level advocacy. More than 600 community people (youth and CBOs representatives) will receive civic engagement training. BRAC JPGSPH will apply participatory research approaches to understand the effectiveness of the interventions.

Finally, there will be a wider dissemination of research findings through meetings and dialogues with government representatives, volunteers, CBOs, local NGOs, and UN agencies to share emerging findings and recommendations, using online and offline platforms.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

BRAC JPGSPH	CPJ
Project Lead and will Conduct Research	Implementation of Intervention Packages

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