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## Program Assessment Report and Recommendations for Future Interventions

BDesh Foundation Funded Program in Cox's Bazar

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## BDesh Foundation Funded Program in Cox's Bazar

### 1. Background

The Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh has undergone a significant transformation since the influx of Rohingya refugees (FDMN<sup>1</sup>) from Myanmar. The massive arrival of refugees has profoundly impacted both the environment and the economy of Cox's Bazar. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the current number of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh is estimated as 952,370, creating a substantial humanitarian crisis and exacerbating strain on infrastructure, services, resources, and community life, further heightening the district's vulnerability. Within Cox's Bazar, the women folk emerge as the most vulnerable individuals, both in the host and Rohingya communities. Addressing the needs of these vulnerable groups, ASEAB has initiated several programs in Cox's Bazar with the support of the BDesh Foundation. One such program focuses on empowering marginalized women by providing training in tailoring for income-generating activities. Additionally, support in shelter and education has been extended to the Rohingya community. With BDesh Foundation's assistance, 300 marginalized women have undergone training, 300 already completed and received sewing machines, and 300 children have received educational support in the Rohingya camp, where education remains elusive but has high potential to play a vital role moving forward.

To comprehensively understand the impact of these initiatives on the participants, an independent program assessment was conducted as per BDesh Foundation's requirements. The findings, gathered through qualitative reviews on the ground and cross-checked with project office documents, are presented in this report. Furthermore, considering the program's context and operational modality, recommendations are provided for incorporation into future program designs. Field visits and data collection were conducted from 29-31 December 2023.

### 2. Methodology

A qualitative research method was employed to evaluate to explore the shifts and changes experienced by the participants as a result of the interventions. This approach also aimed to identify insights that could inform the scope of future programs. The methodology applied is elaborated in the following table:

SL	Tool	Quantity	Respondents
1	FGD (Focus Group Discussion)	3	Teachers, project staff, community people
2	KII (Key Informant Interview)	3	Majhi (Rohingya community leaders in the camps), Health post incharge, project incharge
3	SSI (Semi-structured interview)	30 participants	17 from host communities and 13 from Rohingya community (FDMNs)

Additionally, the review team analyzed various program reports and documents to establish connections between observed changes and the implemented program interventions. This comprehensive approach, involving different tools and a diverse set of respondents, enabled the team to have a holistic exploration of the impacts and potential areas for future program development.

### 3. Brief Description of Program

**3.1 Empowering Women through Skills:** ASEAB, with the support of BDesh Foundation, has implemented a program aimed at empowering marginalized women. The initiative involves a 20-day training program in tailoring, with daily sessions lasting 3 hours. Following the training, participants are

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<sup>1</sup> Forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals

equipped with sewing machines to engage in income-generating activities using acquired skills. A total of 300 women have received training through this program. In the Rohingya camp, an additional component has been introduced, providing an embroidery machine in the Women Welfare Center. This facility serves as a hub for learning and utilizing embroidery for various purposes.

**3.2 Learning Center (LC):** ASEAB has established four learning centers in the Rohingya Camp of Ukhiya, focusing on providing education. Each learning center accommodates **75** students, with operations overseen by the Camp In Charge (CIC). The education curriculum aligns with the UNICEF-developed curriculum for Rohingya. The age range of participants and corresponding grades are structured as follows:

- Grade 1: 4-7 years
- Grade 2: 8-9 years
- Grade 3: 10-11 years
- Grade 4: 11-14 years
- Grade 5: 14-16 years

Currently, ASEAB is facilitating learning up to Grade 4, and the curriculum is based on the Burmese language. Each learning center is staffed with two teachers: one, originating from the Rohingya community, teaches in Burmese, while the other focuses on English, mathematics, and other subjects. This dual-teacher approach enhances the educational experience for the students, providing instruction in both the native language and key subjects. In the learning center, the student also received a tiffin that fulfills their nutritional requirement. All the educational materials and dress are provided by the project.

**3.3 Shelter support:** In addition to its educational and empowerment programs, ASEAB has undertaken a crucial initiative to provide shelter support to 405 families within the Rohingya Camp of Ukhiya. This effort aims to address the pressing need for safe and secure living conditions for displaced families. Following the directives of the Camp In Charge (CIC), the construction of shelters has been done.

## **4. Program Review Observations:**

### **4.1 Empowering Women through Skills:**

**Relevance in Cox's Bazar context:** The program's focus on empowering women through tailoring skills is highly relevant given the societal context of Cox's Bazar, where women traditionally have limited involvement in external income-generating activities. This initiative enables women to contribute economically while remaining at home.

**Effectiveness:** Upon thorough review, the program demonstrates its effectiveness, notably evidenced by the active engagement of the majority of visited participants in income-generating activities and the practical application of acquired skills. Weekly earnings ranging from BDT 1200 to BDT 1500 reflect a tangible economic impact, with variations on special occasions like Eid and other festivals. In the host community, a noteworthy outcome is the emergence of a participant-turned-trainer, highlighting the successful transfer of skills within the community. Beyond financial gains, participants showcase a diverse application of knowledge by repairing and creating their own clothing. Particularly significant is the shift observed in marginalized and widowed women, with one or two households now considering tailoring as their primary source of income. Considering these outcomes, the program is deemed effective in achieving its objectives of empowering marginalized women through skill development. The positive impact extends beyond economic gains to encompass skill transfer, self-sufficiency, and a transformative role in the livelihoods of the targeted participants.

**Implementation efficiency:** Upon reviewing program implementation efficiency, it is evident that the training was conducted by skilled trainers, and received positive feedback from most of the visited participants, who acknowledged acquiring diverse sewing competencies. However, a notable concern arises regarding the quality of the sewing machines, which seems to fall short of established standards

due to budget constraints. Considering this, a more effective strategy could involve allocating a higher budget for sewing machines. Furthermore, it is suggested that supplementing the sewing machine provision with seed capital would enhance overall effectiveness, providing participants with financial resources to complement their newly acquired skills and foster sustainable income-generating activities. Nonetheless, a challenge has been identified regarding the saturation of trained women in villages or localities, leading to increased competition for customers. This, in turn, affects pricing dynamics for their services. A recommendation is made to consider market saturation during training and provide additional guidance on pricing strategies to ensure sustainable income for the participants.

#### **4.2. Learning Center in Camp:**

**Relevance:** The significance of the learning center for children within the camp is explicitly emphasized, as it serves as the sole avenue for their education. Without the learning center, the children in the camp would lack any opportunity for formal education. However, when considering the grade and age of the children, its adequacy comes into question. After Grade 4 (age 10 to 14 years), there is minimal opportunity for continued education, as the secondary level is situated far from the camp. This poses a significant challenge, particularly for females, given security concerns. In adherence to Rohingya cultural norms, which restrict the attendance of females at school after puberty, it becomes crucial to address the educational needs of this specific demographic. Facilities tailored to overcome these challenges are indispensable to ensure sustained access to education for all children within the camp. This particular concern should be taken into consideration for any future interventions.

**Effectiveness:** The students of the learning center have been found to be very vibrant. It appeared that students have achieved the learning competencies by assessing different learning point with few of the students. The students are also provided with extra-curricular activities along with their academics. From the discussions, it appeared that the teachers are competent to conduct sessions.

**Implementation efficiency:** The administration of the learning center demonstrated effective management. The learning spaces are adorned with diverse educational materials created by the students themselves. The documentation processes within the school are also efficiently handled. Additionally, a systematic approach is maintained through regular follow-ups (by whom??/ASEAB staff etc.) to ensure the continued and effective implementation of the learning center.

#### **4.3. Shelter Construction:**

**Relevance:** Recognizing the crucial significance of shelter support, the program has effectively assisted 120 families, ensuring a safe and secure living environment. Shelter support is an indispensable requirement for the refugee community, and the materials and location of the shelters are deemed adequate based on visited respondent feedback.

**Effectiveness:** Upon physical examination of the shelters, it is evident that the materials utilized are of good quality, and despite the passage of a significant amount of time, the materials remain in good condition. This underscores the effectiveness of the program in providing durable shelter solutions.

**Implementation Efficiency:** The construction of the shelters aligns with the instructions and policies outlined by the Camp In Charge (CIC), making the design highly pertinent to the needs of the participants. This adherence to guidelines contributes to the efficiency of the implementation process, ensuring that the constructed shelters effectively meet the intended requirements.

### **5. Market Opportunities for tailoring enterprise**

From the assessment, it is revealed that tailoring is good enterprise for the women to involve in income generating activities. But considering the market saturation, market linkage interventions should be designed. It is possible to group based market linkage with input and output actors. A detailed project proposal can be developed for the purpose.

## 6. Scope for future interventions:

**6.1 Livelihood Enhancement:** The tailoring program, while commendable, faces challenges due to market saturation and other constraints, limiting its potential for further livelihood development among participants. Drawing on the insights and the ground realities, this study argues a customized enterprise approach could be more effective for both Rohingya and host communities. Leveraging the skills, potential, and scope of the Rohingya community, the following enterprises are proposed:

**Non-farm Enterprises:** Utilizing the skills prevalent in the Rohingya community and or with minimum training, the introduction of the following enterprises is recommended:

- Pickles business (Burma Pickles)
- Handicraft (Bamboo and Cane)
- Cap production (Prayer Cap)
- Net making

The Rohingya community possesses expertise in these areas, presenting a viable opportunity for livelihood development. A program tailored to these enterprises could be designed to maximize impact.

**Farm-based Enterprises:** Observations in the camp indicate potential for:

- Vegetable cultivation (Sack, Vertical, etc???)
- Fish cultivation (leasing of pond)
- Livestock and poultry rearing (Limited scale- goat, cage country poultry)

Introducing businesses in these areas presents viable options for improving livelihoods. A comprehensive program can be structured to support and guide participants in undertaking these agricultural and livestock-based enterprises effectively. Considering the market, these enterprises are highly viable because agricultural production is not very prominent in the Cox's Bazar region. Additionally, by developing forward and backward market linkages, it is possible to strengthen the market opportunities for these enterprises.

**Skill-based Enterprises:** Recognizing the contextual dynamics of the area, the exploration of skill-based enterprises emerges as a crucial aspect. Addressing this prime concern involves offering diverse training opportunities for the youth, benefiting both the host and Rohingya communities. Specifically, programs in mobile servicing, driving, and workshop-related skills could be implemented. This strategic approach not only caters to local needs but also establishes a pathway for skilled migration to developed countries. By providing comprehensive training in these areas, the aim is to empower the youth and enhance their prospects for professional growth and mobility.

**6.2 Health Program:** Healthcare service is a basic need for human beings. In the camp, healthcare services are inadequate. By visiting different health posts in the camp, it is observed that an average 123 patients take healthcare services regularly. The healthcare center is supposed to health services to an average of 70 patients daily. However, it is currently serving an average of 123 patients per day. Upon observation and discussion with doctors and patients, it has been revealed that the healthcare provided is inadequate. It signifies the importance and scarcity of healthcare services in the camp. Additionally, safe delivery and motherhood is another important that should be immediately addressed. The rate of early marriage is very high in the camp. The service provided by different projects seems that, is not adequate to address the needs of participants. So, it is important to design a programme addressing the healthcare needs comprehensively.

**6.3 Learning Center:** The urgent requirement for a Learning Center is evident for students in Grade 5 and above, as well as those in Grade 1 in need of pre-primary education within the camp. Ensuring secondary education, particularly for female students, becomes feasible with the establishment of a Learning Center in each camp. Moreover, launching non-formal education programs for the elderly and



adults is a vital step toward fostering an educated community within the camp. More importantly, education interventions should be complemented by moral and ethical education to make the camp environment more cooperative and respectful.

## 7. Overall Recommendations

1. **Diversification of Women's Empowerment Programs:** Instead of conducting mass tailoring training, explore diversified livelihood enterprises to empower women, aligning programs with their interests and market demands.
2. **Budget Allocation for Sustainability:** Allocate budgets in accordance with established standards to ensure the sustainability of programs, maintaining quality and effectiveness over time.
3. **Enhancement of Learning Centers:** Upgrade learning centers to accommodate students in Grade 5 and above, expanding educational opportunities within the camp.
4. **Inclusion of Seed Capital in Livelihood Programs:** Consider the inclusion of seed capital in the design of livelihood programs along with training, providing participants with initial financial resources for sustainable income-generating activities.
5. **Intensification of Program Monitoring and Reporting:** Strengthen efforts in program monitoring, documentation, and reporting to enhance transparency and effectiveness. Emphasize continuous assessment for prompt adaptations and improvements.
6. **Establishment of Linkages and Product Marketing Consultant:** In the course of program assessment, it has been identified that ASEAB, in collaboration with BDesh Foundation USA, is dedicatedly working to enhance education, healthcare, women's rights, and livelihoods for both Rohingya refugees and host communities. This noteworthy initiative is significantly contributing to poverty alleviation. The commendable efforts, particularly in promoting women's entrepreneurship, are expected to positively impact family incomes. However, for long-term sustainability, we propose the engagement of an experienced and skilled consultant. This consultant would play a crucial role in fostering market linkages between entrepreneurs and input/output actors, as well as providing support in marketing their products. This strategic move aims to enhance the overall effectiveness and impact of the project.

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