

# External evaluation.

## Plan International UK's DEC II funded response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh

### SUMMARY REPORT



May 2019

#### CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

In the context of the Rohingyas crisis in Bangladesh, from April 2018 to June 2019, Plan has implemented a Child Protection project that aims to improve child protection and emergency preparedness in Rohingya refugee and host communities. The project funded by DEC under phase II has two main planned outcomes:

- The risk of abuse and other protection issues for adolescents and youth, especially adolescent girls and young women, is reduced in refugee and host communities through safe space activities and awareness raising.
- Adolescents and youth in need of protection, including UASC, are receiving age and gender friendly adequate support by strengthening access to child protection and case management services and efficient coordination.

Key activities include safe spaces for children, provision of gender and age appropriate protection services including case management, family tracing and reunification and enhancing community-based child protection mechanisms.

This summary report presents the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation. The evaluation team was composed of an international consultant, two national consultants and two research assistants. The exercise utilized mixed-methods and participatory approach through a four-phase activity plan categorized around inception, desk review, data collection, and synthesis

A field visit took place from 7th May to 25th May 2019 in Bangladesh, more particularly in Cox's bazar district and included refugees' camps and host communities in Camp 17, 20, 20 extension and in the Host Community in Palongkhali Union of Ukhiya Upazila.

A total of 143 persons was interviewed through KIIs and FGDs with project beneficiaries. (70 female and 73 male) including Plan International staff and other organisations.

## EFFECTIVENESS

EQ 1: Project achievements compared to what was initially planned

EQ 2: Timeliness of the project intervention

EQ 3: Quality of the project interventions

EQ 4: Adequacy of staff expertise and competencies

### Main strong points:

- Even though the project had faced significant delays mainly due to the lengthy process of the FD7 authorization to operate in the camps, it will most probably achieve majority of its quantitative targets except for the number of children reached due to the late construction of the new AFS in host community area.
- Because of the delays, the DEC project had been extended by 3 months and Plan is confident that it will be able to reach the additional beneficiaries such as an additional 150 youths from the 10 additional adolescent clubs, one additional CFS in camp 20 extension who is now hosting around 150 children; 2 more mobile team supporting a total of around 200 children, a jointly run CFS in camp 17 with the local NGO DSK that is reaching between 80-90 children. A first round of Interactive Popular Theaters had reached 10,500 people (including the involvement of Adolescent and youth) and it is expected that the second round will cover a similar number of beneficiaries.
- Quality wise, the project did not devise a specific set of qualitative indicators to follow. For this reason, in the context of the evaluation we used the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS) and the latest CP SOP and pilot Quality benchmarks used at sectorial level by the CPSS. Overall, we found that the interventions had followed well these standards.
- The CFS were reasonably well equipped with first aid kit, attendance books, stationary, recreational items, segregated latrines an access to soap for the children. The CFSs are supported by a management team represented by the parents who meet twice a month. The staff and these committees have been sensitized on many CP topics (FTR, LCCMP, GBV, Child trafficking, child marriage) during their regular meetings. About 85% of the students interviewed/assessed were found to attend the CFS regularly and when visiting the centers, they were full.
- The adolescent clubs visited were active. There was a clear management structure, regular meetings, attendances sheets, minutes of meetings and action plans in place.
- It was difficult for the evaluation team to triangulate information to assess fully the quality of the intervention of the Case management intervention. To respect the Data Sharing and Data Protection Protocol, Plan did not allow the evaluation team to access the anonymized database and to interview directly children and families hosting children. We understand this position as respect for confidentiality of information is one of the key principles for any CM intervention.
- We found that the case management officers were knowledgeable of the key principles and steps needed for a case management system and were using adapted case management forms translated in Bangla. For example, case management officers interviewed reported that they review 85% of the care plans within a month compared to a target of 90% of the plans as per CPMS. They also received daily and weekly support from their supervisors particularly on high risk cases. The evaluation also found many evidences that the confidentiality of information was very well respected. Current average workload per case management officer for the UNICEF/DEC projects is 24 cases in line with the suggested global standard of 25/case worker. Nevertheless, there are example where case worker reported up to 33 open cases to follow up.
- Overall, we believe that Plan has effectively set up the foundations of a CP system in investing a lot of time and efforts to set up a performing CP system through series of training that benefited staff, volunteers and communities. Trainings topics spanned from Foster care, Family Tracing and

Reunification (FTR), Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE), Safe place management, SOP for CP, CPIMS, LCCMPs, Child marriage, Child Trafficking, SGBV and DRR. Staff would still benefit from refreshers trainings and coaching on CM, CPIMS, GBV, PFA as some of them had limited experience before joining the project. The staff interviewed recommended improvements in HR benefits that have been detailed in the report.

- Issues faced was related to staff turn-over and the difficult terrain in which the project staff is working in and personnel have to work long hours in the camps.

#### Main areas to improve:

- A 2018 CPSS situation analysis conducted with 8 CP agencies including Plan identified some areas for improvement and Plan is now working on the recommendations. For example, there was no supervision tool which is now completed as well as the training of supervisors.
- Foster careers support group are not yet organized to allow the families who are currently hosting children (spontaneous families) to share their experiences.
- Service providers met during the evaluation were satisfied with the relationship with Plan staff but requested more information to sharpen their knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the case management officers and how they could better collaborate together.
- There were also no clear evidences that the project was tracking the time spent between the various steps of the case management system and that a detailed analysis of the CP data was used for programming. It is expected that that the soon to be rolled out CPIMS system will bridge this gap.
- For the awareness raising activities, the project did not train staff and volunteers on BCC and did not include in its design pre and post KAPs surveys that could have been useful studies to follow up acquisition of knowledge and practices by various audiences on protection issues, prevention of family separation (CPIE), DRR, PFA, GBV and access to services.
- CBCPC are committed to their work but would require more skills trainings to be able to better prioritize their work and document the work they are doing. They need to be supported to be able to take minutes of their meetings and develop their own action plan. In addition, they would need orientation on communications skills to better disseminate CP messages to their audience.
- If most CBCPC and adolescents' clubs were set up between April to June 2018 except for the clubs in camp 20 extension, many activities were not timely implemented such as for example the construction of the AFS or the peer to peer training and dissemination of messages by the adolescent clubs.
- Finally, the evaluation found some issues with duplication of activities and relevance of the mobile CFS activities that will be discussed in the chapter on relevance.
- Members of the clubs requested recreational games and vocational trainings for the age group 14 and above.

#### Conclusion:

0	1	2	3	4
Low or no visible contribution to this aspect	Some evidence of contribution to this aspect but significant improvement required	Evidence of satisfactory contribution to this aspect but improvement required	Evidence of good contribution to this aspect with some areas for improvement and change	Evidence that the contribution is strong and/or exceeding that which was expected of the project/programme

## EFFICIENCY

### EQ 5: How efficient has the project been?

#### Main strong points:

There have been examples where the project has reduced the cost of the activities in appointing staff close to the camps through the opening of the Ukhia office, in putting in place a car-pooling system or for example in using open space in the office to increase collaboration between staff and facilitate information sharing. Also, the project managed to maintain minimum requirements on the ratio of activity vs support costs and set up a monitoring and supervision system. (even though, findings from the system has not been documented well)

#### Main areas to improve:

- The evaluation examined the latest financial report mi-April 2019 as well as the forecasted expenses to the end of the project. The study shows that only 7,3% of the revised total budget was spent during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester period of the project indicating a delay in startup activities. This is also emphasized by the fact that only 10% of the overall expenses from the first semester was related to activities costs. 78% of the spending for the first period concerns personnel costs.
- The project started effectively to spend funds after October 2018 but could only catch up with the spending to some extent as during the second semester of the project, only 39,2% of the overall revised budget was spent, leaving 53,3% of the total revised budget still projected to be spent during the last 2,5 months of the project (From Mi April to June 2019).
- As many activities will only be completed end of May- June, it will be difficult to fully monitor them and be in a position to appreciate their quality for DEC before the end of the project. Nevertheless, the fact that the project will continue, mitigate this risk as monitoring visits will continue to be performed after June 2019.
- In addition, as explained later, there has been some cases of overlapping of activities and coordination between Plan's departments as well as staff turnover that impacted on the efficiency of the project.

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## SUSTAINABILITY

EQ 6: Systems put in place to enable the sustainability of the project.

EQ 7: Major factors which influenced the sustainability of the project.

### Main strong points:

- Through a comprehensive approach, the project strengthened the ability of the targeted beneficiaries and communities to adapt, cope with and withstand shocks which will contribute to sustain the project achievements.
- Plan has organized numerous needs-based training for the staff, community volunteers, Youth Club members, CFS Management Committees, Community Protection Groups, religious leaders, majhees, local leaders and other stakeholders to improve resilience to future crises. The training includes CPIE, DRR, FTR, PFA, GBV, PSS, CFS management, Referral Pathway System, Case Management, Community Resilience, Social Cohesion, Reporting and Monitoring and Risk Management which are designed to strengthen capacities for managing risks and their impacts.
- Plan supported clubs & committees to develop risk mitigation action plans to manage specific risks identified for their areas. DRR trainings have been organized for stakeholders, CBCPCs and community members to know about relevant risks and preparedness for disasters such as the monsoon/landslides. They are taught to monitor children's movements, prevent separation, and ensure their children know where they live including block name/number for easy tracing in case of disaster.
- The evaluation found that Child Protection Committee members are effectively utilizing their learning by: identifying children at risk and missing, separated & Unaccompanied children for FTR; closely monitoring child marriage cases; identifying GBV issues and referring them to Plan and/or other agencies. Youth Club members have started to cascade learning with their peers to raise awareness on their rights, risks, healthy behaviours, and are increasingly confident to raise issues with their religious leaders, majhees, and others.
- Case Management Volunteers have been capacitated that they can conduct door to door visit to identify vulnerable children and make referral to Plan's Case Management Officers that will then follow up the cases. So far, 219 cases have been identified and followed up by the case management officers.
- The evaluation found that the use of volunteers from among the refugees' communities was a good avenue for building self-reliance skills and more particularly in a context where refugees have very limited work opportunities as they are not allowed to earn an income because of government regulations.
- It is expected that the knowledge, skills and learning that staff, community volunteers, CBCPC members, youth clubs and other community people acquired will continue to be utilized and replicated at community level after the project ends.
- The two following external factors have negatively impact the project's sustainability: Ongoing restrictions on movement of girls/women and participation have reduced their ability to access services, access volunteers' position and develop their life skills. Government restrictions on education, livelihoods, movement, shelter, access to services and lack of protection framework limits self-resilience of refugees.
- The following positive factors have influenced the achievements of the sustainability of the project: Commitment of communities (parents, CBCPC) and volunteers, trainings provided to volunteers and beneficiaries that contributed to project sustainability and trust building measures and efforts done by Plan to invite parents/caregivers to attend the clubs at the beginning of the intervention to reassure them that their children were in good hand.

**Main areas to improve:**

- Adolescents have not been trained yet on i) communication skills to disseminate messages as well as on the development of IEC materials (ex: recording radio messages), ii) journalism training to enhance their communication skills and build confidence).
- The CBCPC in the host community should be better linked with the ongoing meetings and coordination space of the DSS at Upazila level and further train on prioritization of tasks, planning and communication methodologies. Members have not been used yet at their full potential to be used as agent of changes/gate keepers/duty bearers to organize structured awareness raising activities through courtyards meetings for example.

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**IMPACT**

EQ 8: Differences the project has made to adolescent & children.

EQ 9: Unforeseen positive and negative impacts of the project.

EQ 10: Project impact on the environment

**Main strong points:**

- The DEC project effectively implemented a range of activities to reduce the risk of abuse for children.
- Static CFS and mobile teams are safe and secure spaces for children in the camps and have contributed to supporting children to cope with the traumatic experiences they have experienced, by reestablishing routines, facilitating socialization and offering learning in their own language.
- The life-skills program for adolescents is valuable in raising awareness around key child protection risks and equipping adolescents, especially girls, with skills for resilience.
- Case management achieved positive impacts in the living situation of children and their families by i) addressing cases' needs through direct service provision and linking to available services, ii) supporting them to better cope with the situation that they face, and iii) supporting children and families in reducing risky behavior, often resulting in protection concerns.
- The findings also suggest that case management activities, awareness raising and outreach activities conducted had a positive impact on people's awareness of their rights and services available to them, as well as people's perceptions around child protection concerns, abuses of rights, and the receipt of case management support.
- The evaluation found many evidences and case stories of how the project has changed positively the life of children. Practices and stories show impact on education, family relationship, violence against children, child trafficking, child marriage, hygiene and preparedness measures before natural hazards.

- There were also some unforeseen positive impacts such as i) the foster parents reporting that their own children benefited from the training the parents received on positive parenting ii) vendors becoming increasingly aware of not hiring underage children in the camps.

**Main areas for improvement:**

- The evaluation found that the project did not capture evidences of change such as case studies or qualitative studies on Most Significant Changes. Pre and post KAPs surveys were not used to measure knowledge, Attitude and Practice related to awareness raising activities and capacity building interventions.
- There was also no readily available analysis of the case management database of the closed cases to identify outcomes of the case management intervention.
- It is expected that the newly introduced CPIMS+ will provide information to analyze trends in protection issues that can later on be used for planning and prioritization of activities and resources.
- Satisfaction of services is considered as a proxy indicator of impact in the context of emergency. The evaluation appreciated that there has been attempt from Plan to investigate the satisfaction of the children engaged in the CFS and mobile activities. This interesting initiative would need to continue but the methodology would need to be strengthened to also record the challenges faced by the children as the survey report that was provided to the evaluation only recorded positive outcomes and no challenges.
- Observed, unforeseen negative effect not only related to Plan but to awareness raising efforts from different organizations, is that in some cases, early marriage went “ underground” also because of the increased awareness on its illegality. Volunteers are still reporting such cases indicating that the Plan network is performing well.
- There was no specific impact found on the environment nevertheless activities to transport staff and goods that are one of the cost drivers of the budget have produced CO2 emissions that have not been compensated or mitigated. Adolescents clubs could have been trained on tree plantation as to restore the degraded environment in the camps.<sup>1</sup> This would have had a multiplier effect as trees are also excellent carbon sinks in the fight against climate change.

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**COORDINATION, COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

EQ 11: Coordination and complementary with others

EQ 12: Communication and accountability to the beneficiaries

There have been many reported examples on how Plan coordinated well at CPSS level and with government institutions. Plan is a recognized and active contributor to the work of the CPSS and staff are participating regularly to the CP coordination meetings in the camps. In the meantime, the evaluation

<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that there was no provision in the project design for tree plantation.

found some area to strengthen as there has been cases of overlapping programming in some blocks that are being discussed between agencies. Also, cross components and cross departments collaboration could be improved within and outside the organization between the education and protection interventions.

Plan put together feedback mechanisms that mainly involve face to face interactions (even though feedback boxes were also used) through different entry points including the CP focal points, CBCP committee members, refugee community volunteers, adolescents and children of the Safe Spaces with the project staff. Interviews confirmed that the beneficiaries are aware of the system. Nevertheless, complaints were not systematically recorded and made available for analysis during the evaluation. All respondents contacted during the evaluation did not report bad behavior of Plan staff. Confidentiality of information in the context of the CM work was strictly followed.

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## RELEVANCE, COVERAGE AND TARGETING

[EQ 13: Beneficiaries' implication in selection Process](#)

[EQ 14: Relevance to needs](#)

[EQ 15: Inclusion of age, gender and disability](#)

[EQ 16: Adaptation to changing context](#)

### Main strong points:

- The community reported that they have been consulted before the activities started. They were not always aware of the selection criteria and sometimes mentioned that Plan staff asked them to attend the club sessions. A parent from a foster family indicated that he understood well the implication of his commitment to receive a child if needed. He highly valued the relationship already established with a case management officer.
- Based on available information produced by series of child protection related assessments, this evaluation found that the DEC project was relevant with the protection needs of the children and relevant to the needs expressed by adolescents 12-14. The program has contributed to address some of the gaps in services for adolescents while in the meantime providing safe place for children. To some extent, the child-friendly spaces compensate for the limitations imposed by the Government of Bangladesh on education activities and have facilitated the identification of children who were severely affected by the crisis and in need of focused and specialized psychosocial support. The project contributed to several key protection objectives of the Joint Response Plan 2018 and 2019. The provision of preparedness messages to the children affected by weather-related risks was appropriate and shows a good example of DRR mainstreaming in a protection project.
- In some instances, Plan developed activities indicating a good adaptation to changing context such as i) the adaptation of the Safe places to be used as Lost Children Caregiver Meeting Points (LCCMPs) during emergencies as per requirements from the CPSS, ii) the reprogramming of its activities in camps 17 and 20 (instead of camp 10).



### Main areas for improvement:

- Influential people selected the adolescents for the clubs but unfortunately were not given vulnerability criteria to ensure a better inclusion based on age, gender and disability.
- As suggested by the recent UNICEF evaluation, more thematic focused studies on specific protection issues are now needed at the assessment/baseline stages to inform program design and also later on to measure the impact of activities and track CP trends through the CPIMS+.
- The protection intervention did not respond well to needs of adolescent 15-17 that expressed more engagement in income generating activities and vocational trainings activities that have been restrained in the past by government regulations and that are generally activities considered under the education and food security sectors.
- The evaluation found that the mobile CFS intervention would need to be revisited as there were significant duplication of activities with the ones proposed in the CFS as majority of children attended both interventions. Mobile activities were also only partly able to reach out of school children and adolescent girls 15-17. In camp 20 extension, the evaluation questioned the rationale for having opened a CFS “ generation I” 1,5 years after the influx when psychosocial needs of children have largely been addressed by restored family networks and increased access to social services. Plan is aware of this and is considering moving to “ generation II” CFS through the concept of multipurpose centers as suggested by a previous UNICEF evaluation (for their own interventions).
- Plan’s intervention was successful in recruiting an almost equal number of women and men staff and volunteers for the CP activities. Similarly, efforts were made to ensure that boys and girls participate equally to the proposed activities. Nevertheless, we found that out of 30 clubs only one was a girl only club. Knowing the strict social norms that restrict adolescent girls to access educational activities, it would have been more relevant to have many more girl only clubs.
- If Plan’s interventions are open for children with disabilities, we did not find evidences of disability inclusion in the program. We also acknowledge that Plan did not commit in its project proposal to work on inclusion.

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### LESSONS, REPLICABILITY & SCALE

#### EQ 17: Learning from the intervention

In some cases, to speed acquisition of skills, Plan rightly, initiated basic training of staff without waiting for a sector approved tool. Coaching and shadowing were also found good avenues for learning. Adolescents will receive trainings on how to disseminate CP messages to their peers in using pre-recorded messages (using a radio set) to accelerate dissemination of CP information to children, parents and leaders in an environment with limited FM radio signal. Plan is expected to learn more from this activity planned for June 2019. Plan, under the umbrella of the CPSS contributed in preparedness activities by participating in

the development of the Lost Child Caregivers Meeting Point (LCCMP) SOPs. The initiative led to identification of safe spaces and meeting points for lost children in case of an emergency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the evaluation, series of strategic and more operational recommendations have been suggested per program component and with diverse timeframe for implementation.

Main recommendations are related to:

- A better optimization of the relevance and use of space of the static spaces in line with the concept of multi-purpose center that should also ultimately improve the reach and relevance of future intervention for adolescent 15-17 including hard to reach population such as out of school children and adolescent girls.
- The need to increase the number of adolescent girls only clubs with inclusion of vulnerability criteria for the selection of these children.
- The importance of developing indicators, monitoring tools and researches to track and document quality and outcomes of the future interventions.
- There is also a need to measure effectiveness of CP awareness raising interventions through KAP surveys and to strengthen skills in Behavior Change Methodologies for staff, volunteer and the CBCPC.
- The importance of better include gender- age and disability across the program.
- The strengthening of the referral pathway through trainings for service providers on the work performed by the CM staff.