

Fatema Jannat*, 16 years old, Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar Bangladesh



Fatema Jannat is a 16 years old Rohingya refugee girl who lives in one of the camps in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.*

Fatema Jannat* is a 16-year-old Rohingya refugee who lives with her parents and siblings in one of the camps in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. They fled to this neighbouring country from Myanmar due to the violence and finally settled in the camps two years ago. While in Myanmar, she did not attend school though had a zeal to learn in heart. In the camps in Bangladesh, she showed her interest to go to school but her parents did not allow as the learning centres teach both the boys and girls together. With a heavy heart she continued reading Quran instead, alone at home.

One day, some people visited her house looking for the children interested to attend a learning centre only for girls. The most interesting part of their proposal is the centre will be at home. She was happy to attend but her parents were not so sure about it.

"It wasn't an easy journey for me to learn. My parents were so conservative and were not sure about letting me to attend at the initial stage. But after the volunteer counselling they agreed as they found the centre is only for girls and I had not to go to another place. That's how I started learning at the HBL."

Fatema* learns English, Burmese, Mathematics and life skills at the HBL. Learning through games and making sentences with words are her favourite things to do in the learning centre. She dreams to become a teacher in future to help other girls like her to learn new things.

"I wasn't allowed to go out much, so I had very few friends. After attending the learning centre I made some new friends and we help each other to learn and share our stories. I can write my name and others as well. I can also make sentences from words.

"I have learned about hygiene. In our community, we do not care much about hygiene during the menstruation though it is very important and can keep us safe from infections. I have learned how to take care of myself and maintain hygiene during that time. I discussed this with my mother who also were not aware at all.

"I have also learned about the disadvantages of child marriage and protective behaviour. Both of these are very important specially for girls of our ages who lives in the camps. I have also shared these with my parents. Like me they also had no idea about all of these issues. They were amazed and decided not to arrange my marriage before my 18."

"I am happy with my progress of gaining knowledge and so are my parents. I help them reading the food cards and other informative documents. They now believe that education is also important besides the religious study. They feel proud of me and most importantly they gave my younger sister permission attending school."

Fatema* is aware of the hygiene practices and the basic things to maintain during COVID-19. She says, "we have heard about this new virus. I know about using elbow while coughing and sneezing, washing hands frequently and to maintain social and physical distancing. But I don't know how to follow them in this congested camps, but I am sharing these messages with the people I know and inspiring them to follow as much as they can."

Rokeya Bibi*, Fatema Jannat*'s mother is very happy for her daughter. She says, "Fatema is the first girl in our family who is attending school and already she is making us proud. Because of her now we realize that education is very important



Fatema Jannat is writing in the class at the Home Based Learning centre before education centres' shut down due to COVID-19.*

for our children, the community and us. It actually helps us to become more conscious about the world and protects us from all the darkness around.”

“Besides, we are also learning new things through trainings. We now know how to behave with our children and how to take care of their mental health especially during the COVID-19 times. I have never realised that how badly our behaviour and words can affect our children until I took part in those trainings.”

**name has been changed to conceal identity*

Interview conducted and photographed by Sonali Chakma, Media and Communications Officer for the Rohingya Response, in Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh on 23rd March 2020.

Summary and project information:

With the generous funding support by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), Save the Children has set up 80 Home based Learning (HBL) Centres for the Rohingya refugee girls in the Cox’s Bazaar Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, providing education and life skill trainings to 1600 Rohingya refugee girl children and parenting sessions to their parents. Fatema Jannat* is one of those Rohingya refugee girls who attends the HBLs.

Programme information specifically:

As part of Education program, we have set up over 100 Temporary Learning Centres (TLCs), 140 Community Based Learning Centres (CBLs), 10 Girl Friendly Spaces (GFSs) and Home Based Learning (HBLs) centres. Through all these facilities, we are supporting about 15,000 children and with a safe space to learn. We are running awareness sessions with community leaders, parents and children to expand education to vulnerable children and save them from issues like trafficking, child labour and child marriage. We are providing life skills training and parents’ awareness session to both children and their families. In addition, we are providing children with vital psychosocial support and referring them to mental health and psychosocial support services if needed.

Response information and major issues:

Nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees – over half of whom are children –live in squalid conditions in camps built on fragile land, which at high risk of cyclones and floods during the monsoon season. Homes are made from bamboo and plastic, and drainage and electricity are extremely limited. In these precarious living conditions, children are incredibly vulnerable. They are particularly susceptible to illnesses like serious respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Malnourished children are much more likely to die if they contract diarrhoea, sometimes within days.

Save the Children is one of the leading international non-government organisations (NGOs) in Cox’s Bazaar and has reached more than 850,000 Rohingyas and members of the host community since the start of the crisis in 2017. Save the Children has more than 1,300 staff and volunteers supporting our programs in child protection, education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation services, as well as the distribution of shelter and food items.

More than two years since their arrival in Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugee crisis remains a protection and solutions crisis at its core and children are in need of protection assistance, including from exploitation and different types of abuse, child labour and child marriage. Most refugees are in urgent need of case management services including more than 8,500 unaccompanied and separated children. Yet, despite efforts from NGOs and donors, less than half of the urgent cases are receiving individual case management services.



Fatema Jannat is attending a class with her friends in the Home Based Learning centre before the education centres’ shut down due to COVID19.*

