REKINDLING HOPE
GIFTING A SMILE

JRS South Asia
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Mohammad Hanif fled to Bangladesh with his mother and four siblings, along with hundreds of thousands from Myanmar’s Rakhine state, to escape the ethnic persecution. Hanif is a 10-year old refugee who loves drawing and comes regularly to HOPE (one of six Child Friendly Spaces run by Caritas Bangladesh, supported by JRS in Cox’s Bazar refugee camps). Morning circle, drawing, role-play and storytelling are the four sessions that keep the children fully engaged at the CFS.

From the enthusiastic involvement of the children, it is clear that story telling is their favorite; and the two hours they spend in the CFS is the best part of their week in the midst of the overcrowded Rohingya refugee camps. Unlike other children, however, Hanif prefers drawing and sketching.

“I get enough paper and colors to draw here, and I often wish that I could draw all day.”

-Mohammad Hanif
“I’m happy that Hanif has gradually started doing things that he would back home. He was the best student in his class while in Myanmar. He would sing, dance and draw pictures; but he was very disturbed when we landed here. He would enquire about his father, get angry and run away from the shelter, but now he is calm and happy since he is able to draw and learn new things at the Centre,” says Hanif’s mother. The wide smile on Hanif and his mother’s face bring hope to others as well.

“His earlier drawings were scenes of violence, or his village and home blazing; but now he draws flowers, birds, and children playing - his drawings reflect more positive feelings. He enjoys drawing and is very good at it.”

-CFS facilitator

During the past five months, Hanif has been one of the most regular students. After the two-hour session in the CFS, Hanif goes to a Learning Centre run by another agency, where children learn English and Maths. Hanif loves the CFS as it helps him relate to his early days at home, and he always inquires if he can learn English in the CFS too. Hanif lives with his mother, siblings and relatives in one shelter. They are not sure about his father’s whereabouts, but hope that one day they will meet him again.
Children at CFS
Nurul Amil, a 10-year old, and his little sister Afiza, just 5, are Rohingya refugees enrolled in the Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) that Caritas Bangladesh runs with JRS support at Camp 4 in Cox’s Bazar. Nurul loves the two hours he spends with children his age at the CFS.

The CFS gives Nurul and his friends a chance to enjoy their childhood with art, dance, sports and counseling. Living in overcrowded camps since they arrived, the CFS helps them forget their troubles—even if it’s only for a few hours. It’s the only space they can enjoy on their own as kids.

Initially, Nurul came to the CFS with much reluctance. He was an introvert, and spent most of the time staring out of the window. At times he would cry, was unable to concentrate and would not participate in any activities. But the CFS staff did not give up on him, knowing the trauma he had suffered. Today, Nurul is the leader of his group! He also ensures that Afisa attends the CFS for her age group. Nurul was in the 4th grade back home in Myanmar. He is very bright, and has a quick wit. He thanks the CFS for giving him back his dreams,

“I love to learn new things and I want to go to school, so that I can become a teacher when I grow up.”

- Nurul Amil
According to the U.N. Refugee Agency, 919,000 Rohingya refugees live in Cox’s Bazar district of Bangladesh, the largest refugee settlement in the world today. This include about 200,000 who arrived in earlier waves of exodus. More than three quarters of the refugees are women and children. Supported by several agencies, the Government of Bangladesh just about manages to cope with the challenging situation -a lot more still needs to be done.

Most refugees at Cox’s Bazar have managed to set up their own shelters with makeshift latrines, and receive food as well as non-food rations. The women, children and aged, however, are afraid of leaving their settlement for fear of getting lost or harassed while walking long distances to reach distribution points over unsteady bridges and muddy pathways. Life stops when the sun goes down in the camp, if they do not have access to light. The solar lights have changed all that.

“Solar street lights have brought us much relief. We not only feel safe while going to the latrine or water collection tap at night, but our children also get more time to play outside”

- Hamida
Till date, 200 solar-powered street lights have been set up in camp public places, like water collection taps, toilets and along pathways. Women and girls, who were forced to restrict their movements at night, can now move about peacefully late into the evening and have more time to fetch water, and carry out household chores.

Children enjoy more hours of play with their friends outside their shelters. The solar street lights are a great blessing, lighting up the darkness of their lives, ensuring much needed safety and security in the camp, especially for the women, girls, children and the aged.
Peace & Reconciliation Workshop

Danielle Vella, from the JRS International team, is developing Peace and Reconciliation manuals for JRS teachers of the South Asia region. As part of the pilot project, the regional team organized a workshop in Delhi from August 25 – September 3, for 20 participants, including 15 from Afghanistan. Danielle began the training sessions by inviting the group to reflect together on the butterfly of peace and actively engaging them in role plays, group discussions and sharing of personal stories. Zainab enjoyed the friendly environment of these sessions and explains the new insights she gained:

“The training helped me identify my challenges, weaknesses and strengths. As an Afghan girl, I have suffered lots of pain and injustice. The workshop opened a new window of truth, mercy, peace and hope in my life.”

-Zainab

Luke Rodrigues, a Bombay Jesuit, facilitated the second phase of the workshop, with some lively sessions on critical thinking, to help build a peaceful society. Using puzzles and mind games, he encouraged the group to understand their context and think outside the box to work in dialogue with all stakeholders for the common good.
On their break day, the participants enjoyed a trip to the Taj Mahal. The aesthetic beauty of this wonder of the world in marble will remain a cherished experience for all. Andrian Rosario conducted the third phase of the workshop on NGO management and leadership. His interactive sessions helped the group to plan for their long-term mission ahead as leaders, and understand the organizational competencies they need to develop for working together in synergy for conflict resolution and sustainable peace in the community.

Critical thinking and NGO management helped me to understand my society better, and gave each of us an opportunity to share their views freely. The process will help me to plan peace activities for my workplace and motivate my students to engage in peace building too.

- Mohammad Behzad, participant from Afghanistan
"That day was so useful for us we learn that we are all born free and equal. We all have our thoughts and ideas. We should all be treated in the same way."

- Madina Qazizadah
Student, HTI
International Peace Day

International Peace Day was a day devoted to reflecting on peace building, engaging in peace education and learning about peace initiatives that seek to resolve violent conflicts across the world. JRS students at the Herat Technical Institute chose to celebrate the United Nation 2018 theme for Peace Day “THE RIGHT TO PEACE - THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT 70”. Students from all classes along with their teachers began preparations and awareness sessions well in advance for the day’s events, presentations and talks.

The 30 articles of THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS were taken up in each class for discussion and review. The articles were discussed in the context of Afghanistan, the decades of suffering from conflicts and war, and the need for working to bring peace to the country and the region. The students’ made their presentations with a lot of enthusiasm, passion and eagerness. They expressed a deep desire and commitment to seek paths towards peace and reconciliation.

“One good thing that I could see in my students was their nice and positive smiles for the peace and peace day toward each other. They learned that they can start bringing peace with a smile and thinking positively.”

- Ziba Rezayi, English Instructor, HTI
International Day of Peace
September 21

THE RIGHT TO PEACE

70 YEARS OF UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
World Peace Day was celebrated at the Chin Centre on the theme: Right to Peace - 70 years of Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All the refugee women and children expressed their thoughts on World Peace Day through the skills they were learning at the Centre. After an introductory session by Ms Jennifer, the children of the English class shared their ideas in small groups and prepared charts on the theme of peace.

“God will help us on our way, if we try our best to create a peaceful nation.”
- Lalrinchhan, student

The Computer basic class students expressed their views on peace using their Paint program skills. The advance class used the Photoshop program to express their ideas. The Vocational skill trainees worked together to present the theme of the World Peace Day with hand made embroidered designs. Ms. Lalnunpui highlighted the significance of their group work as a team explaining:

“Without sharing our life with others there cannot be peace among us.”
Thank You...