



From the world's largest refugee camp in Bangladesh:

Meet **Toyoba Begum, Riya Moni and Rojina Begum** from Cox's Bazar

In August 2017, an outbreak of hostilities in Myanmar triggered the displacement of more than 600,000 Rohingya people, who fled across the border into Bangladesh to seek refuge. Their plight not only affected the lives of Rohingya men, women and children, but also the communities in Bangladesh who became their hosts.

Population density was already high in Bangladesh and resources stretched, when thousands of Rohingya arrived at their doorstep in the flood and disaster-prone district of Cox's Bazar that overnight turned into the world's largest refugee camp complex.

As of 2022, an estimated 541,000 Bangladeshi host community members in Cox's Bazar are known to be in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is assisting both Rohingya and their host communities to enhance their protection, build new livelihoods, improve shelter conditions, and offer critical camp management support. Meet three aspiring and resilient Bangladeshis who are among the 1.4 million people living in and around the 34 camps established for the Rohingya.

Toyoba's garden – planting trees in Cox's Bazar

Toyoba Begum is watering her plants while her little daughter curiously assists. These plants hold many dreams and hopes for a better future after years of uncertainty.

Toyoba was born in Palong Khali, Cox's Bazar. At 12, she was married off to an older man. At 20, she gave birth to her child, but soon after her husband left. Laifa, her daughter, became the only reason for her to live. She made a promise to herself that Latifa's life will be different. She worked day and night to ensure that this could happen.

Then came the Covid-19 pandemic. Toyoba earns a living from being a house maid, but many of her employers would no longer let her into their homes. She lost much of her work. Toyoba shares her problems with friends from the neighbourhood who are facing similar issues. One day Toyoba's friend Lovely suggested to ask DRC for help.

Shortly after, Toyoba became a part of DRC's Community-Based Protection group. After several discussions among the women, they suggested launching a plantation project which they believed would benefit them significantly. They could then grow fruit and vegetables, adding to their daily food intake, saving themselves money at the market, and selling any surplus for cash. They would also be able to sell chopped wood in the future from the large trees planted.

The community requested support in growing plants from different categories to accommodate different needs. They asked for coconut, lemon, neem, and arjun seeds. DRC then distributed 14 different plants to each of the 30 vulnerable women in the project.

'When I was lost and hopeless, I needed help. This has changed. My plants are like my children, who will be standing beside me tall and strong during difficult times. The plantation project will not only improve the individual lives of people like us, but a project like this will definitely have a positive long-term effect on the natural flora of the region.'



‘It is so rewarding to witness the journey from a single little plant to a large tree capable of growing fruit and vegetables. The sprouting of a seed was extremely fascinating to my daughter when she experienced it for the first time. When I look at the little plants in my garden, I see hope and happiness in my daughter Latifa’s eyes.’



Arjun was distributed because of the popularity of its wood and the fact that it does not suffer from any major diseases or pests.

Neem is a fast-growing large tree with a dense crown, preventing soil erosion, providing wood in future, and also serving as a natural mosquito repellent.

Coconut and lemon plants were distributed for family consumption and as a means to additional income through selling in local markets.

‘We chose the four different plants because of their unique specialties, because we believe nature holds both the problem and the cure deep within.’

DRC Protection officer (CBP) La Khing says, “Ukhiya is a disaster-prone area, so the plants require special attention. We constantly monitor their growth and help the beneficiaries with fertilisers, pesticides, and fences.”

The tree plantation project is in its monitoring phase now. DRC has built a fence around the gardens so that the plants are kept protected. The community protection officers visit the beneficiaries to examine the progress of the plantations.

It is a project with long-term impact and embedded with dreams and hopes as it requires nurturing and over time it can change the lives of the community members.



‘When our plants grow into large trees, we will hang swing sets in all of them, and I will play with my friends under their shade.’
– Latifa, Toyoba’s daughter



The Protection Programme is funded by the European Union and supports approximately 20,000 Rohingya and Bangladeshi host community members in Cox’s Bazar.

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