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UN Volunteer Anika Tanjim at a refugee camp learning centre, creating awareness among girls and parents on the importance of quality education for the future in the Rohingya community.

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Securing the right to education for refugee girls in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, around 50 UN Volunteers are taking action to make a difference in the lives of refugees. On World Refugee Day, we share the story of UN Volunteer Education Officer Anika Tanjim, who is one of 28 UN Volunteers supporting the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in its response to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.

UN Volunteers in Bangladesh provide support to refugees in issues related to education, water and sanitation, health care, research, nutrition, child care and gender, among others. Based in Cox's Bazar, they serve with the international Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UNICEF and UN Women.

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As part of the UNICEF education team, Anika is working in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar on the implementation of educational activities in UNICEF-supported learning centres. She is passionate about ensuring that girls in the Rohingya community receive a proper education.

“ When I saw Rohingya children in need of support, I thought about my two little sisters and the role I played in their upbringing. I realized that Rohingya children are no different to children anywhere else in the world. They want to play and get into mischief, they want to learn, and they want to have the same opportunities as everyone else. I realized I could play a very different role here than what I thought my job would be like. I wanted to make sure I could help these children, make them smile and help them to feel valued each day. --Anika Tanjim, UN Volunteer Education Officer with UNICEF, Bangladesh

Anika has also supported the cash transfer programme to foster caregivers during COVID-19 response efforts.

“ The biggest lesson I have learned while working in camps is the power of humanity. Irrespective of our background, colour, race or age, we must all remain united for one cause. --Anika Tanjim

Anika observed that girls in the Rohingya culture rapidly drop out of learning once they reach a certain age for a multitude of reasons. She first noted that 12 girls had dropped out of a learning centre during one of her monitoring visits last year. With her team, she has advocated with religious leaders, community members and parents to change this situation.

With the support of partners at the community development centre, they found a solution to bring the girls back to learn – through providing segregated lessons for girls. Now the number of students has increased from 12 to 25, with more girls transforming their dreams to learn into reality.

Inspired by this, UNICEF and partners, are assessing the scope of expanding such opportunities to enable girls to get an education and raising awareness in communities.

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“ Bringing young girls back to learn again and being able to engage with the community despite cultural and religious taboos is one of my lifetime achievements. This has not only allowed the community to rethink the role of girls and women for a progressive society, but also to actively make a change. --Anika Tanjim

For Anika, working in a challenging setting, with extreme weather (from intense heat and humidity to monsoon rains) and travelling to refugee camps three to four days a week was not easy at the beginning, but she quickly adjusted to her new environment.

"While engaging with children and youth, I have seen impressive leaders and their true potential to make this world a better place," Anika says. "This was my source of motivation and dedication to work hard to support these children."

Anika was recognized in the World Food Programme publication [Unsung Heroes: Humanitarians in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh](#), for her impact on the Rohingya refugee community in one of the largest humanitarian interventions in the world.

“ I got to experience this meaningful journey through my decision to become a UN Volunteer. UNV provides young people with the opportunity to become world class professionals and grow within a community of dedicated experts. --Anika Tanjim

Anika is committed to taking every action she can to ensure a quality education and meaningful engagement for Rohingya children.



• World Refugee Day • Rohingya • Bangladesh • IOM • UNDP • UNFPA • UNHCR • UN Women

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 4: Quality education](#) [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)