



Today the camps sprawl across 6000 acres in Ukhiya

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

At the edge of a winding uphill road, right next to a host of tea stalls busy selling cigarettes from Myanmar and entertaining Rohingya teenagers, lies Sufia's home.

Made out of plastic sheets and bamboo poles, Sufia's residence, like the rest in Kutupalong camp, has just about enough room to accommodate her family of six. That morning, however, there were about a dozen children buzzing on the floor of her 'guest room', screaming out English alphabets at the top of their lungs.

Ask them what two plus two is, and they will jump right at you. "Four!" shouts Saidul, a five-year-old wearing a brown lungi and a blue sleeveless vest. Move into the higher double digits though, and you find a couple of heads being scratched and a few sheepish smiles.

Barely 17, Sufia has taken the responsibility to ensure that the fate of the next generation of Rohingya turns out to be better than hers. She transforms her home into a school every day where she teaches children Burmese, English, and Mathematics.

"I want these children to study like I did. That's why I teach them here. Back home (in Myanmar), girls can study till grade 10. I studied till grade 8," says Sufia. It has only been a month since she started her small school. But she has already realised that these children, most of whom are below five years of age, need plenty of help.

"When I teach them Burmese, some of them ask me when we can return home. And then they start

“Till now, there hasn't been a single death due to starvation and neither has there been an outbreak of a deadly disease. This is actually a miraculous achievement.”

talking about the atrocities and the killings of August 25. They get scared. That's why I try not to make them recall those days," explains Sufia, who was trained as a teacher in the camps before she started her school.

It's not just the children. Even Sufia's mother, Hamida, panics when she recalls how her relatives and villagers were killed right in front of her. She explains that her family left their hometown on August 25, the day the Rohingya exodus began.

"Our village was attacked with bombs. Some people died, some lost their legs, and others ran for their lives with whatever they managed to carry. It was total chaos. Our homes were destroyed! My head spins whenever I think about those days,"

shares a wide-eyed Hamida.

"After reaching Kutupalong, we lived on the streets for two weeks before a home was built for us. Those days were very difficult. We used to struggle to get food. But things have changed a lot since then. Today we get rice and *dal* on a regular basis. It's a bit hot here, but we are doing well," she adds.

From chaos to stability

One year ago, the camps at Ukhiya seemed incapable of hosting such a huge influx of refugees. Like Hamida's family, most of the newly arrived

share of the pie, as opposed to the newly arrived.

There were also problems with the kind of supplies being donated. Almost every nook and corner of the camps was filled with clothes, rejected by the Rohingya, since they didn't need them. And it took camp officials several days to clear out the mess caused by these rejected attires.

Accessing some of the areas was also a major problem. One would have to walk through knee-deep mud in order to visit some of the newer camps formed further down the road from the Kutupalong refugee camp, which made it difficult for aid workers to reach the refugees.



The camps are expanding everyday

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

lived on the streets outside the refugee camps for days. The locals at Ukhiya were the first ones to help them. Soon after, the region started receiving aid from various parts of the country.

While there were hundreds of trucks coming in with food and supplies, there were very few distribution points and most of the Rohingya weren't even aware of them. As a result, children and men would run after relief trucks and literally fight for food being thrown from the moving vehicles. It was the stronger and the more experienced Rohingya who would get the majority

One year on, however, there seems to have been a dramatic shift in the way things are being run. For starters, the area has been divided into 32 camps and there are camp-in-charges (CIC) in place to ensure that everything runs in a smooth manner.

The muddy pathways have been replaced with roads made of bricks.

Many of the hilly areas, which are prone to accidents, have proper steps now. According to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), a coordinating body of international organisations,