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# OXFAM FRESH FOOD VOUCHER PROGRAMME

Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar,  
Bangladesh, January 2018 – September 2019

Programme evaluation - summary external document

GABRIELLA D'ELIA AND KHODEZA AKHTAR JAHAN RUME

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*(NB: Delays in publication of this document are, unfortunately among other things, mostly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so some issues may not be as relevant.)*

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Action Contre La Faim
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
CiC	Camp in Charge
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
ECHO	European Civil Protection and <i>Humanitarian Aid</i> Operations
EFSVL	Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihoods
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FFV	Fresh Food Vouchers
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSC	Food Security Cluster
GUK	<i>Gana Unnayan Kendra</i> (People Development Centre)
ICCO	Interkerkelijk Coördinatie Commissie Ontwikkelingshulp ( <i>Interchurch Coordination Committee for Development Aid</i> )
KII	Key informant interview
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
MMC	Market Management Committee
NGO	Non-government organization
PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
REVA	Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
TWG	Transfers Working Group (formerly Cash Working Group)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PROGRAMME

**Scale:** At its peak in September 2018, the programme reached 24,626 households (approximately 123,130 individuals)<sup>1</sup> with fresh food assistance.

**Relevance:** The intervention was considered relevant and appropriate by the participants, partners, the humanitarian community and local authorities.

**Impact:** The programme had a strong positive impact on refugees, who no longer had to resort to negative coping strategies to feed their families and could see a future that went beyond the next day. Household Dietary Diversity Scores<sup>2</sup> improved in parallel with its implementation, although insufficient evidence was gathered to attribute this directly, or only, to the programme.

The initiative also had a positive impact on local markets, strengthening existing value chains and supporting local producers and vendors, who had been negatively affected by the refugee influx. Local vendors participating in the programme said their businesses expanded by between two and five times as a result.<sup>3</sup> The programme also encouraged exchanges between refugees and local vendors, leading to mutual understanding and greater social cohesion.

**Inclusivity:** All stakeholders' inputs were welcome, and all felt that they had contributed to the outcome of the programme. Refugees and vendors were particularly appreciative of Oxfam's inclusive approach, as they saw themselves as being actively involved in the programme rather than as mere recipients or service providers.

**Flexibility:** The programme readily accommodated changes and requests. For example, it adapted quickly from the planned e-voucher mode of delivery to paper vouchers; took into account seasonal changes and refugees' preferences in defining the list of foods that could be purchased using the vouchers; and swiftly extended geographical coverage to support entire camps, in response to feedback from the Camp Site Management.

Safe programming was ensured through initial joint assessments to identify and respond to protection concerns, and protection and gender were mainstreamed in the programme. For example, participating vendors attended awareness sessions that enabled them to identify and address protection and gender concerns during distributions and to accommodate the needs of vulnerable people.

**External influence:** Throughout the programme, Oxfam worked closely with the wider sector and the authorities. Oxfam shared its initial plans for the programme and coordinated with the food security and nutrition actors in its development, and shared learning with the humanitarian community. Maintaining open communications with the government led to a growing acceptance of vouchers. Prior to this, the Bangladeshi government did not allow any cash and voucher assistance in the Rohingya refugee response, so this acceptance represents a significant achievement and has paved the way for similar interventions. This will ultimately result in better humanitarian assistance that meets the needs and upholds the dignity of the Rohingya refugees.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In August 2017 Oxfam implemented a complementary Fresh Food Voucher (FFV) programme in Cox's Bazar, south-east Bangladesh, in response to the rapid influx of Rohingya refugees. Vouchers were distributed on a monthly basis from January 2018 to August 2019, with funding from ECHO and the DEC. The intervention aimed to ensure **dignified access to a wide range of fresh food for vulnerable and food-insecure refugee households and to improve their nutritional status**. The programme also aimed to support the local economy by making goods available from local market vendors, who sourced produce locally where possible.

In September 2019, the FFV programme was suspended due to unavailability of funds. Oxfam took this opportunity to evaluate the programme, in order to:

1. document the programme, from design to implementation;
2. assess its impact on refugees and the host community;
3. consider its influence on the wider humanitarian response;
4. capture learning from the above and offer recommendations for future voucher programming.

This document captures the key findings of the evaluation and puts forward lessons and recommendations. It is hoped that this will prove useful for agencies using voucher programming in the Rohingya response and others. It is also intended as a contribution to the wider influencing agenda around Market-Based Programming, including cash and vouchers.

## METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted by two Oxfam Humanitarian Support Personnel staff. It comprised a desk review and fieldwork in-country, followed by a virtual team debriefing and write-up and analysis of the findings. Data collection took place between 20 October and 20 November 2019. The fieldwork included 32 key informant interviews with Oxfam staff members and representatives of other organizations and working groups, and 22 focus group discussions (FGDs) with programme participants, members of the local business community and the wider host community (see Table 1)

**Table 1: Key informant and focus group discussion interviews**

Interviewee/group	Location	Number of interviews/discussions
INGOs with similar programmes	Cox's Bazar	3
Cash/Transfers Working Group	Cox's Bazar/remote	2
Food Security Cluster	Cox's Bazar	1
ECHO	Cox's Bazar	1
Camp in Charge/Site management	Cox's Bazar	5
Oxfam staff	Cox's Bazar/remote	20
Beneficiary community	Camp 3, 4, 4 Ext, 12, 19	8 Women-only, 5 Men-only
Vendors	Kutupalong and Balukhali	2
Market Management Committee	Kutupalong and Balukhali	2
Host community	Kutupalong and Balukhali	2 Women-only, 3 Men-only

## 2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROGRAMME

In late August 2017, the Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts of south-east Bangladesh faced a sudden mass influx of Rohingya people fleeing human rights violations and systemic violence in Rakhine State in Myanmar. By the end of November 2017, 655,000 refugees were reported as having crossed the border to seek refuge in Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup>

The refugees had experienced severe trauma, were living in precarious conditions and were highly vulnerable; an estimated 55% were children.<sup>5</sup> The speed and scale of the refugee influx resulted in a critical humanitarian emergency, with negative effects on the host community. Many farmers had to surrender their land to the government for camps, and thus lost their livelihoods. Market vendors found that their traditional customers could no longer afford to buy goods, and refugees also lacked the financial means to do so.

In September 2017, Oxfam began providing lifesaving assistance to both refugee and host community populations. This included water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH), protection, emergency food security and vulnerable livelihoods (EFSVL) and gender interventions in the Rohingya refugee 'megacamp' near Cox's Bazar. In October 2017, Oxfam conducted a Rapid Protection, Food Security and Market Assessment,<sup>6</sup> which revealed the following:

1. A high level of market functionality around camps in the nearby towns of Ukhia and Teknaf. Traders in both areas had high capacity; all reported being able to meet a 25% to 100% increase in demand, and 92% were interested in taking part in a humanitarian voucher programme.
2. Prices for wholesale and retail were proportional, suggesting well-integrated markets both before and after the refugee influx.
3. The refugee population were highly dependent on markets.
4. Refugees faced restrictions in access to markets, both physical and financial – including the need to pay for transportation to the marketplace.
5. Since fleeing Myanmar, refugees' dietary diversity had deteriorated (falling from 11-12 food groups prior to displacement, to only 3-4).
6. Social networks (among the Rohingya people, and between refugees and the host communities) were vital for accessing food.
7. Refugees were resorting to negative coping mechanisms, including selling staple food aid in the market, in order to purchase fresh food, shelter items, medicines and other non-food items.

Oxfam's findings on dietary diversity were in line with those of the Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA) carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP) in November 2017.<sup>7</sup> Access to meat, fish and eggs was extremely limited, while fruit and dairy consumption was almost non-existent. Only one in four women had access to a minimally diversified diet.

### 3 PROGRAMME PLANNING, COORDINATION AND DESIGN

Given the findings of the REVA and Oxfam assessments, it was agreed that complementary fresh food vouchers were the most viable option to improve nutrition among refugees and to reduce the high rates of anaemia<sup>8</sup> and malnutrition<sup>9</sup> seen among refugee children. Vouchers would also enable refugees to choose their preferred foods. Although not a direct objective, it was expected that one of the programme’s indirect outcomes would be to reduce social tensions by supporting local markets. Oxfam and the Food Security Cluster (FSC) committed to jointly implement a fresh food vouchers (FFV) programme in designated parts of the Rohingya refugee megacamp.<sup>10</sup>

Keeping in line with local requirements, Oxfam decided to use a voucher system rather than direct cash, and initially introduced an e-voucher system, RedRose,<sup>11</sup> to allow easy and reliable data collection for registration and monitoring, and rapid expansion of customer numbers if necessary. However, due to understandable concerns among the authorities, this was changed to a paper voucher mechanism, which was functional, but unfortunately caused delays in programme delivery as well as some internal financial losses due to the initial investment in the technology.

#### Fresh food basket and voucher value agreed

SI No. (ক্রমিক নং)	Items List (দ্রব্য সমূহের তালিকা)	Item Picture (দ্রব্যের সমূহের ছবি)	Unit (একক)	Price per unit (Taka) (প্রতি একক দ্রব্যের মূল্য (টাকায়))
01.	Dried Fish (Small) (ছোট মাছ / ছোট মাছ / শুকানো মাছ (ছোট))		250 gm	35
02.	Spinach (পালং শাক / সবুজ শাক / সাল শাক)		01 piece	25
03.	Green Chilli (কাঁচা মরিচ / কাঁচা মরিচ)		250 kg	12.50
04.	Egg Plant (বেগুন)		01 kg	30
05.	Onion (পেঁয়াজ)		01 kg	25
06.	Garlic (রসুন / রোড়নি)		01 kg	25
07.	Egg (টিউ)		01 piece	8.5
08.	Turmeric Powder (হুসুনের গুঁড়া)		250 gm	40
09.	Red Chilli Powder (ছকনা মরিচের গুঁড়া / শুকানো মরিচের গুঁড়া)		250 gm	30
10.	Dried Red Chilli (ছকনা মরিচ / শুকানো মরিচ)		250 gm	43
11.	Potato (আলু (সিনি))		1 Kg / 250-gram	25
12.	Sugar (চিনি)		250 gm	15
13.	Salt (সবুজ)		01-kg	20

The list of fresh food items, based on availability and community preferences, was finalized in coordination with the Nutrition Cluster, using the ‘NutVal’ to calculate nutritional content; it was designed to improve dietary diversity by complementing the WFP’s general food distributions of rice, cooking oil and lentils.<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of the programme, refugees could choose from a list of 10 fresh food items (this was later expanded to 14, in response to requests from refugees). The ‘basket’ included dried fish, eggs, sugar, salt, red chilli, green chilli, turmeric, potatoes and vegetables.

Voucher value depended on household size, with two options: 730 Bangladeshi Taka/BDT (\$8.60) for households with seven members or fewer, and 1,170 BDT (\$13.80) for households with eight members or more.

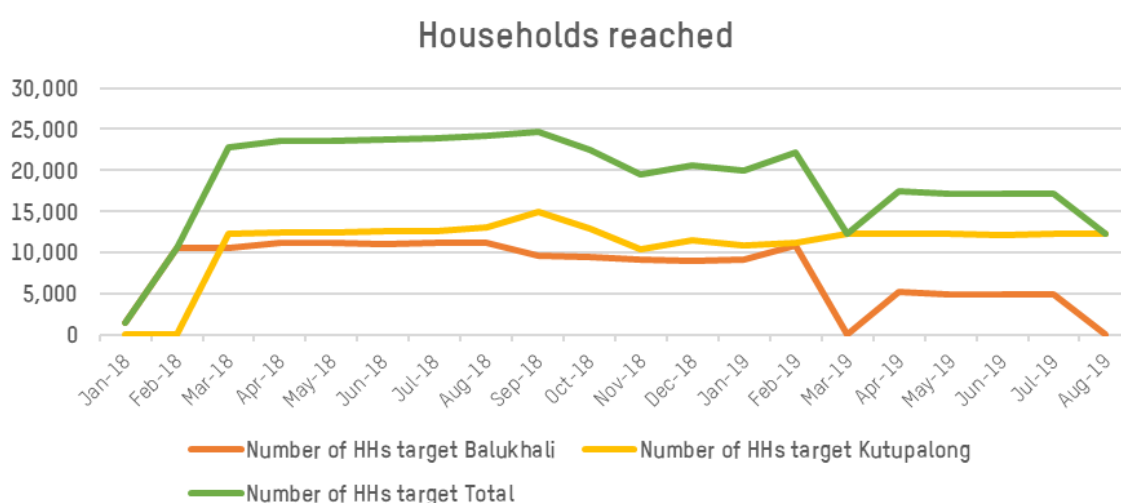
Oxfam finalized contracts with vendors – whose number eventually grew to 29 – and provided training, including on gender and protection issues.

## 4 PROGRAMME REACH AND IMPACT

A pilot distribution took place in January 2018, and the programme reached maximum coverage between March and September 2018, at its peak reaching 24,626 households – approximately 123,130 individuals<sup>13</sup> – with fresh food assistance (see Figure 1). October 2018 saw the beginning of a decline in coverage, and from September 2019 no further distributions took place due to the exhaustion of all available budget.

Throughout the programme, refugees could contact Oxfam to highlight any difficulties they encountered. Initially, long distances and the need to carry heavy loads forced people to use their scarce assets to rent transport in order to visit markets. Oxfam therefore negotiated to allow local vendors to open shops inside the refugee camps. This meant that more households in the camp could easily participate in the programme; it also increased refugees' trust in humanitarian actors.

**Figure 1: Number of households reached by Oxfam's FFV programme**



### Impact on refugee households

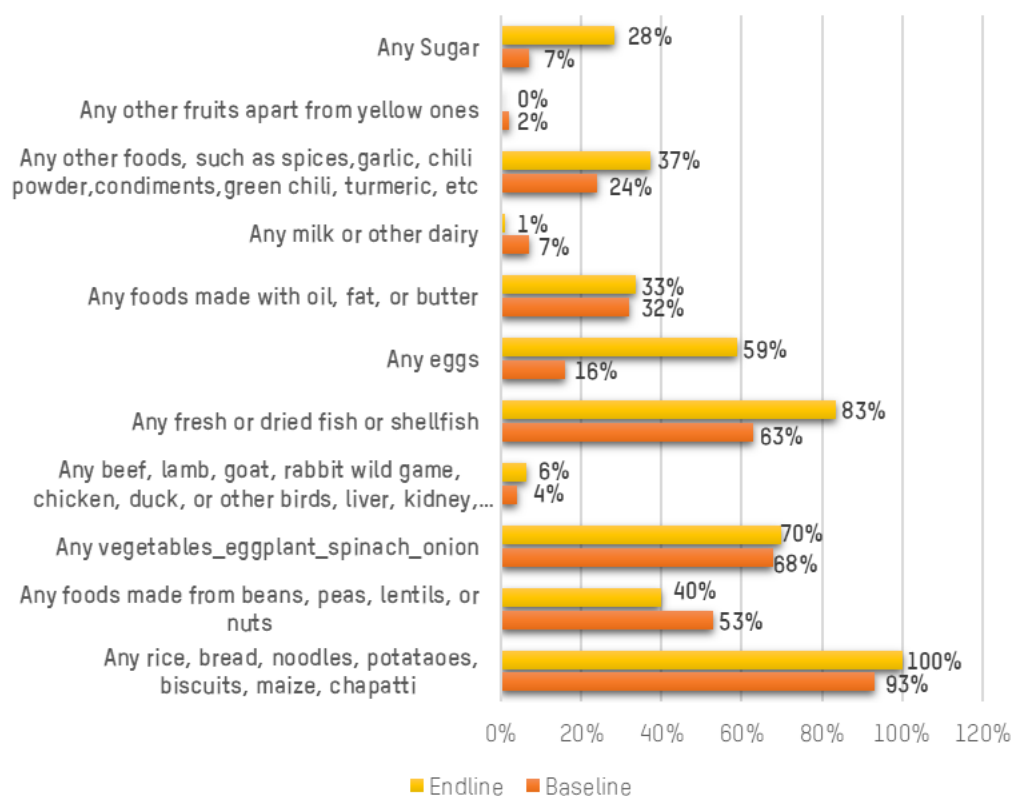
The programme had a strong positive impact on participants, who no longer had to resort to negative coping strategies in order to meet their basic food needs. In addition to the sale of WFP food aid, as mentioned above, these included the sale of assets brought from Myanmar, and – for women – skipping meals or reducing portions in order to prioritize other family members (children, pregnant women, elderly people and adult men).<sup>14</sup> Women were particularly appreciative of the intervention: they expressed pride in being able to feed their households, and said it meant they could begin to see a future beyond the next day.

The monthly post-distribution monitoring (PDM) exercises showed very high levels of satisfaction with the programme, including with the amount provided per family. As an example, one of the PDMs<sup>15</sup> found that 96% of respondents considered the voucher amount sufficient to cover their monthly fresh food needs; 100% said they felt safe travelling to the vendor; and 90% felt safe in shops. However, FGD participants revealed that they would have liked voucher amounts to be defined *per household member*. It was felt that the lower amount (of 730 BDT) was sufficient for households with up to four members but was not enough for those with five to seven people.

Although the monthly PDM reports did not directly investigate household dietary diversity, comparison between the Oxfam EFSVL baseline and endline reports for 2018 shows a clear improvement in the percentages of refugees consuming fresh and protein-rich foods (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Comparison of household dietary diversity<sup>16</sup> at baseline and endline<sup>17</sup>**



As shown in Figure 2, before the intervention only 16% of households reported consuming eggs; this had risen to 59% at the end of the year. Similarly, the 63% with access to fish at the start of the year grew to 83%. Meat consumption remained very low, which might be partly explained by the fact that meat couldn't be purchased with the vouchers.

According to FGD respondents, the availability of vouchers to buy fresh food reduced or stopped the practice of refugees selling their WFP rations, allowing households to consume all their staple food parcels. After the intervention began, 100% of households were able to consume rice and starchy food, up from 93%.

In July and August 2019, Oxfam conducted surveys<sup>18</sup> to assess the Food Consumption Score (FCS)<sup>19</sup> of target populations. Of the 721 people interviewed by Oxfam over the two months, almost 95% scored 35 or above, which places them in the 'acceptable' (i.e. the optimum) FCS category. The WFP's 2018 REVA<sup>20</sup> (REVA II) found that refugees who received food vouchers had better diets than those who did not,<sup>21</sup> including better intake of micronutrients.

## Impact on vendors and the host community

At the peak of activities, Oxfam contracted 29 mid-size vendors. Where possible, vendors sourced fresh food (mainly vegetables) locally, from Teknaf peninsula, helping to boost the local economy. All participating vendors reported having expanded their businesses by two to five times, with some opening new shops, including in the camps. They also reported increased access to credit from financial institutions and linked this directly with the programme because it had supported them in opening bank accounts. The vendors reported significant improvements in their professional and personal lives as a result of business expansion: they mentioned being able to pay for their children's education, improve their homes and support relatives in need.

Vendors also reported feeling proud to contribute to the humanitarian response as well as being viewed favourably by other NGOs during assessments for new contracts: being a partner in the

Oxfam FFV programme implied their understanding of protection and gender awareness as well as their technical knowledge of the voucher system, making them more competitive candidates.

*'After the protection training, we felt like real partners and started protecting children when we saw abuses.'*

Vendor, Kutapalong

Vendors needed help to manage the shops opened in the camps, and because refugees could not be legally employed, they recruited people from the host community. In one part of the camp – where Oxfam contracted 15 shops – vendors each reported to have hired at least three extra people, meaning that at least 45 local people gained employment directly linked with the FFV programme. Vendors said they were proud to be able to participate more actively in community life, including supporting families in need. They also reported being viewed favourably by other NGOs during assessments for new contracts, as mentioned above particularly for their gender and protection awareness and experience of using a voucher-based system.

## **Improved relations between refugees and the host community**

Local vendors' perceptions of the refugees improved, as they now saw them as active contributors to economic life rather than just recipients of aid. The opening of shops inside the camps fostered better relations between refugees and the local people running the shops and assisting with voucher distribution. Although this didn't extend to the whole host community, the bond was beneficial for all involved. Refugees reported feeling welcome and respected in the shops, and vendors reported feeling safe inside the camp. Participants in the FGDs and key informant interviewees recognized that humanitarian organizations were able to promote opportunities for exchange between the two groups. The mutual trust and respect this fostered is indicated by the fact that refugees volunteered to ensure the security of some shops in camps overnight.

## **Inclusivity and accountability**

According to the FGDs and key informant interviews, all stakeholders felt their contribution was welcome and valued. Households were consulted on their food preferences and were very pleased when most of the items they had expressed preference for were included in the FFV basket. After the first round of distributions, refugees asked for additional items to be included, such as potatoes,<sup>22</sup> which were then added to the goods on sale. When their requests could not be fulfilled (e.g. due to cost or availability), Oxfam explained the reason for this.

Post-distribution monitoring, monthly and biannual accountability reports show that a minimum of 54% and a maximum of 91% of respondents felt comfortable providing feedback through the help desk provided. All FGD participants reported feeling listened to and comfortable with the feedback mechanism, although some mentioned that they would have preferred to have a hotline to provide feedback; this is confirmed by the baseline survey.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, Oxfam was unable to respond to this request, given the limited staff numbers and budget.

As a result of the inclusive approach, vendors reported feeling like true programme partners, not just service providers. They were consulted on the availability of items, market locations and the implementing mechanism. They said that the gender and protection training they received made them feel comfortable working with vulnerable people, as they were better able to understand and accommodate their needs.

Vendors adopted a 'learning by doing' approach: even without prior experience in humanitarian contexts, they were actively involved in creating a fair market area in the camps that would bring benefits for vendors and good service to participants. This resulted in vendor meetings taking place every month to set fair prices (according to seasonality, availability etc.).

A Market Management Committee (MMC) was set up, consisting of elected members and local authority representatives, to ensure a good business environment. The MMC agreed to collective rules and sanctions and dealt with any violations – this was done with Oxfam’s oversight, but not at Oxfam’s command. It also included monitoring market interactions to ensure that vendors were not treating customers unfairly (e.g. by giving them lower amounts than stated, providing low-quality items, etc.). MMC members appreciated the monthly meetings with the Oxfam team, which helped to build trust and allowed any issues to be discussed and addressed.

## **Flexibility of the programme**

As described above, the programme demonstrated its flexibility by rapidly adapting to the unexpected change in delivery mechanism, from e-vouchers to paper – although this did entail the need for extra staff, due to the more labour-intensive nature of paper vouchers. There was also a degree of flexibility in terms of voucher value (with one for households with up to seven members, and one for households with eight members or more), though as mentioned above, the FGDs revealed that participants would have preferred the voucher value to be determined by the actual number of people in the household.

Evaluation participants appreciated the FFV programme’s flexibility in responding to their requests for additional fresh food items (which increased from 10 to 14) and changes according to season, e.g. during the month of Ramadan.

The programme was able to readily adapt its geographical coverage. The initial strategy was to cover camp locations where Oxfam’s Public Health Promotion team was already active. However, when the programme began, residents of blocks not included in the activities complained to the camp management, asking to be included. After meeting with the Camp Site Management<sup>24</sup> and Camp in Charge<sup>25</sup> (CiC) representatives, Oxfam adopted a blanket coverage approach in targeted camps, to reduce the potential for tensions.

Another adaptation was that Oxfam decided to pay the VAT on goods (on top of the payment to vendors) on behalf of refugees, to maximize their access to the fresh foods on offer, and set up a separate budget line for this. Many business owners indicated that this practice had allowed customers to purchase more than they could with the vouchers later distributed by other agencies, which did not cover the cost of VAT.

## 5 INFLUENCE ON THE WIDER RESPONSE

Several external key informants described Oxfam's FFV programme as 'pioneering', because it introduced a market-based approach to the Rohingya response.

### Coordination with the humanitarian sector

As a member of the Fresh Food Voucher Sub-Working Group, Oxfam provided guidance and shared learning with other organizations in the group. The Transfers Working Group (TWG) appreciated Oxfam's proactive approach in sharing plans and information and disseminating good practice and pilot results. To support the inter-agency coordination on cash transfers, Oxfam seconded the first TWG co-lead for three months. Oxfam also continually shared information and progress updates with Food Security Cluster (FSC) members, motivating other organizations to replicate the intervention in their assigned areas.

Oxfam helped to share and replicate the model more broadly through capacity building, including welcoming other NGOs' staff to internal trainings and providing technical support, clarifications on procedures and on-the-job training. This approach was appreciated and encouraged by donor agencies, including ECHO.

Coordination with the Nutrition Cluster to define the basket of items was an important innovation for Oxfam. This highlighted the importance of looking beyond calorie count when planning food security interventions and considering the long-term impact of non-varied diets. Oxfam also provided bi-monthly market price monitoring data to the FSC for use by all food security and livelihoods agencies. Beyond the Rohingya response, the FFV programme was presented at the National Food Security Cluster in Dhaka.

The FSC and its members all recognized the influence of Oxfam's approach and sharing of this on their later programming and more widely in the food security response to the Rohingya crisis. This is indicated by the fact that similar programmes have since been implemented by Action Contre La Faim (ACF), Helvetas/Shushilan, ICCO, GUK, Relief International, World Vision and World Renew (Faith in Action). The approach is currently hoping to be adopted at a greater scale by the World Bank/WFP through its 'Farmers Market' programme in Cox's Bazar.<sup>26</sup>

### Coordination with the authorities

Coordination with national and local authorities was strong and consistent throughout the programme. Despite some temporary issues around the use of e-vouchers, the relationship remained solid and facilitated the joint identification of viable options, resulting in the shift to paper vouchers. Oxfam communicated and sought approval for every distribution, and continually shared findings and results. In doing so, Oxfam managed to demonstrate the benefits of market-based cash and voucher programming for both refugees and the host community, and gained the trust of all involved. This enabled the expansion of the programme and the eventual piloting of e-vouchers in 2019 (see below) and helped create the conditions for voucher interventions led by other humanitarian agencies.

### E-voucher pilot in early 2018

As a result of ongoing discussions, in the spring of 2019 Oxfam was granted authorization to run a three-month e-vouchers pilot in Camp 3, funded by the DEC. This used the RedRose platform, as originally planned for the whole FFV programme. According to FGD participants, the pilot outcomes were very positive for both customers and vendors.



Customers appreciated the freedom it gave them to buy smaller amounts of perishable food more frequently, and the fact that they could see how much was left on the e-voucher after every purchase. Vendors all confirmed its success and their willingness to use it. They appreciated its user-friendliness and the immediate availability of receipts. The e-vouchers also helped them plan their stock and limit losses due to deterioration. Vendors also welcomed the introduction of the new technology in view of potential business expansion and contracts with other organizations. The positive results from the pilot helped to demonstrate the benefits of an e-voucher system to all involved.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The evaluation findings clearly show that the complementary FFV programme had a positive effect on the Rohingya refugees as well as on the local host community. A clear improvement in the dietary diversity of households residing in the camps was observed in parallel with programme implementation (although insufficient evidence was collected to prove that this was solely attributable to the programme).

There was a reduction in negative coping mechanisms among refugees – particularly women, who resorted less to fasting or substantially limiting their food intake to prioritize other members of their household. Women appear to have gained a new feeling of self-worth because they could feed their households without selling assets or other food aid.

The programme improved the relationship between the refugees and the host community. While in a direct sense this was limited to the vendors participating in the programme, various members of the wider host community also benefitted economically as a result of the increased demand for fresh, local produce.

The programme helped to influence the food security programming of the other organizations involved in the response. It has been replicated entirely or in a slightly modified form by other agencies, and all those interviewed linked their intervention to the positive results shared by Oxfam.

Finally, the programme has helped to demonstrate the impact of voucher assistance in not only supporting refugees, but also boosting the local market economy and value chains and contributing to the reduction in tensions between refugees and the host community. The support from other stakeholders for such a programme represents a significant achievement and has paved the way for similar interventions. This will ultimately result in the provision of better humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees and beyond.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are drawn from these and other findings; while some are specific to the Rohingya refugee response, it is hoped they will also be useful for teams in Oxfam and other organizations who are implementing or considering similar interventions elsewhere.

**Define geographical targeting** in the early stages of the programme, considering implications for social cohesion. Target entire camps rather than selected blocks to reduce the potential for conflict among refugees who receive vouchers and those who do not.

**Define a scale-up/scale-down plan** to be shared with the Transfers Working Group and CiC/Camp Site Management, to reduce risks in the event of a sudden interruption of the programme and ensure that there is sufficient time for a negotiated handover.

**Consider linking the voucher value to the number of individuals in the household.** The transfer value could be redefined within the Transfers Working Group, considering a basis for essential fresh food expenses and an additional amount per person.

**Allow, where possible, extra budget for VAT.** This allows participants to increase their purchasing power of food items while ensuring that vendors cover all their costs.

**Ensure that teams are adequately staffed** according to the type of programme delivery; for example, paper vouchers are much more labour-intensive while e-vouchers require trained ICT staff. Monitoring of such activities is also of high importance, and dedicated staff must be included in the team structure.

**Ensure that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are developed, communicated, adhered to and regularly reviewed** by field teams. SOPs should clarify roles and responsibilities and the segregation of duties. They should clearly outline the custodians of data and/or important documents or assets to prevent any issues of fraud. The Control/investigation mechanism for internal allegations should be defined and shared, and should include providing feedback to all relevant people.

**Ensure close collaboration with the nutrition sector** to strengthen the nutrition component of any intervention. Awareness-raising sessions run alongside voucher distributions could help to maximize the impact of fresh food vouchers by encouraging refugees to make healthy choices.

**Plan, hold and document inception and mid-term review workshops.** A mid-term review will allow for programme analysis, and re-orientation if necessary.

**Strengthen accountability mechanisms.** Enable communities to reach out in their preferred way, or if this is not viable in the context, explain why this is the case. Any allegations of fraud or corruption cases concerning vendors should be handled by the relevant local governing bodies, and updates on any decisions made (e.g. blacklisting of a vendor) should be shared with relevant stakeholders.

**Where possible, maximize engagement between local and national bodies** to ensure that knowledge and experience are fully shared and utilized – for example, working more closely with national bodies such as the Cash Working Group in the capital could bring helpful insights and relevant experience to the local working groups.

## NOTES

- 1 Figure based on an average of five members per household.
- 2 Household Dietary Diversity Score is defined as the number of unique foods consumed by household members over a given period. It has been validated to be a useful approach for measuring household food access, particularly when resources for undertaking such measurement are scarce.
- 3 20 vendors who participated in the FFV programme took part in the FGD exercise for this evaluation; all reported having expanded their business as a result of the programme. The opening of a shop inside the camp meant doubling of the business for all participants, while one vendor reported having been able to open five more shops with the profits made through the programme.
- 4 Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis, Inter Sector Coordination Group, 31 December 2017. [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/171231\\_weekly\\_iscg\\_sitrep\\_final.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/171231_weekly_iscg_sitrep_final.pdf)
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Oxfam (2017) Rapid Protection, Food Security and Market Assessment. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/rapid-protection-food-security-and-market-assessment-coxs-bazar-bangladesh-nove-620978>
- 7 World Food Programme (2018) Refugee influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA), p.13 [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000073690/download/?\\_ga=2.53270184.1410388578.1583832674-883743482.1574939454](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000073690/download/?_ga=2.53270184.1410388578.1583832674-883743482.1574939454)
- 8 '... nearly 50 percent of children suffered from anaemia (Hb <11.0g/dL) which represents a severe public health problem according to WHO threshold (<40 percent).' WFP (2018) op. cit., p.25.
- 9 'The prevalence of acute malnutrition among all children 6-59 months of age (measured through weight for height) significantly exceeds the WHO emergency threshold (15 percent).' Ibid.
- 10 From Oxfam's perspective, the camp was divided into two parts – the northern part, Kutupalong and the southern part, Balukhali.
- 11 RedRose is a technology company which specializes in developing innovative electronic cash transfer products. Its 'ONEsystem' enables organizations to deliver all modalities of cash aid including: multi-purpose cash, paper vouchers and e-vouchers. The system can be used for assessments, beneficiary registration and tracking, programme monitoring for cash and in-kind distributions, and can be tailored to programme needs. It works online and offline, with real-time programme information and remote management, is easily scalable, and features a visual dashboard to allow programme overview. The company offers on-site training and remote support. <https://www.redrosecps.com>
- 12 NutVal is an Excel spreadsheet application used by UN and NGO agencies for calculating the nutrient content of food assistance programmes. Developed by UNHCR in the 1990s, it has subsequently been updated by the Institute of Global Health – University College London, in work funded by a series of small grants from WFP, UNHCR, UCL Futures and the IASC Global Nutrition Cluster. <http://www.nutval.net/>
- 13 Figure based on an average of five members per household.
- 14 Women in FGDs mentioned having to sacrifice their own food intake to feed their family members. Men in FGDs did not mention the wives or adult women eating less, but said that men and women shared equally. This is similar to the REVA findings.
- 15 September 2018, Balukhali camps.
- 16 Household Dietary Diversity Score is defined as the number of unique foods consumed by household members over a given period. It has been validated to be a useful approach for measuring household food access, particularly when resources for undertaking such measurement are scarce.
- 17 EFSVL Baseline Report MEAL 2018-07-03, and Endline Report final 2018-12-12.
- 18 In Camps 3, 4 and 4 extension.
- 19 The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency and the relative nutritional importance of different food groups. The FCS is calculated using the frequency of consumption of different food groups consumed by a household during the seven days before the survey. Scores are clustered into three groups; the results of the analysis categorize each household as having either 'poor', 'borderline' or 'acceptable' food consumption.
- 20 World Food Programme (2019) Refugee influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA-2018), [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/2019/06/190618-WFP---REVA-II\\_0.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/2019/06/190618-WFP---REVA-II_0.pdf)
- 21 Ibid., p.31.
- 22 PDM report January-March 2018.
- 23 EFSVL Baseline Report MEAL 2018-07-03
  
- 15 Oxfam Fresh Food Voucher Programme: Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, January 2018 – September 2019

- 24 Representatives of a UN agency or INGO that manage the humanitarian work in the camp.
- 25 Civil servant appointed by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) on a rotation basis to all camps and settlements, to act as the government's representatives at the camp level. Responsible for daily administration, coordination and delivery of services.
- 26 Like the Oxfam FFV programme, the WFP Farmers Market aims to give refugees direct access to fresh produce that closely meets their food preferences and needs. Its key objectives are: to diversify the dietary intake of beneficiaries by increasing their intake of fresh and protein-rich foods; and to significantly improve market linkages between refugees and host community small-scale farmers, traders and retailers. The pilot began in November 2019 in Camp 7. In December, it reached five blocks, and \$134,000 of vouchers were redeemed.

For further information about this report, please contact Khodeza Akhtar Jahan Rume  
[Khodeza.Rume@oxfam.org](mailto:Khodeza.Rume@oxfam.org)

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Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

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