

Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) as implementing partner of UNHCR organized a children fair at Nayapara and Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camps on June 19 and 20 respectively. RIB's Director (Research and Program) Dr. Md. Korban Ali and former Chairman and Associate Professor of International Relations Department, University of Chittagong Md. Faridul Alam were the chief guests of the children fair at Nayapara. Along with the chief guests, RIB's Regional Coordinator and Education Coordination were also present at the fair.

The color riot that sparked with the beautiful smiles of the Kajoli children waving colorful balloons crafted an atmosphere of festivity in the whole camp. The proud teachers of each center were restless to guide their young learners and seemed to be equally excited about their student's performance. Guardians and audiences were waiting enthusiastically to watch what their children have learnt so far in the centers. The fair began formally with one of the animator's recitation of some verses from the Holy Quran. Then the chief guests came up with their motivational speeches. They upheld the importance of education in refugee lives and thanked the parents for supporting the education of their children which in their opinion is the only tonic to breed consciousness about their rights and responsibilities. Further they expressed their satisfaction seeing the numbers of toddlers with twinkling eyes and thirst for knowledge. The guests were excited to watch the performances of the kids. As the children began performing, the staged turned out as their playground where they learn the lessons of life in a playing mode. They started singing and reciting Bangla, English and Burmese poems. Burmese language has recently been introduced in the centers and the kids proved that if the learning process could be made joyous, they learn things very fast. Kids were smart in the stage with no fear or nervousness rather they seemed to be happy to show their talents.

After the singing and recitation part, our youngest learners of 3 to 3+ kids came to the stage with a mother and they demonstrated what they do in the Crèche. They played with their toys and were smiling all the time. Then a group of adorable dancers with little umbrella in their hands came up to rock the stage with a rainy season song. All through the program children spell bounded the audiences with their songs, dances, recitation, play etc. Animator Abdul Mazid also sang in the program while animator Nur Kabir and Hamid Hossain upheld the shared experiences of their refugee lives; they also thanked RIB for arranging such unique and effective educational arrangements for their kids. At the end of the fair, animators, teachers and children were awarded prizes for performing best in their respective fields. While teachers, animators and audiences have had their very significant roles in the success of the fair, children made the day special with their lively, colorful and enthusiastic performances.

Children fair at Kutupalong camp took place on June 20 which is World Refugee Day also. Arranging a fair in World Refugee Day created kind of tensions among the people. Many of them were of the opinion that this day was for mourning not for enjoying. Therefore, they thought that letting their children to sing and dance in World Refugee Day would not be a right thing to do. Initially they prevented the students and the children from coming to the fair ground. However, at that point of time RIB personnel were able to make them understand that they did have any intentions to hurt their sense of refugee hood neither did they ignore their miseries. They clarified their position to arrange a children fair on 20 June claiming that refugee children enlightened with education showing their talents in public would make it clear that an educated refugee generation is not going to suffer in future like their predecessors; rather they would be vibrant regarding their rights and duties. UNHCR personnel also showed up the bright sides of letting those children enjoy the fair. Later with participation of the camp people and also the chairmen of BMC and CMC, the fair began in full swing. Though it was raining cats and dogs and that created a bit of chaos, rain could not stop the enjoyment of the children. Bates Assilbekova from UNHCR, Md. Korban Ali from RIB and Md. Faridul Alam, Associate Professor of International Relations, University of Chittagong were present at the fair as chief guests. Save the Children and RIB were having program together in the same stage. Participants from Kajoli centers and crèche came up with loads of songs, poems, dances, play-acting which entertained the audiences throughout the program. The distinguished guests in their speeches thanked and appreciated the parents for sending their children to centers for education. The program ended with awarding prizes to the best teachers, animators and students.

The children fair at Nayapara and Kutupalong refugee camp were remarkable since toddlers with latent talent, color, enthusiasm and liveliness unplugged dreams in the eyes of some persons who have long lost their dreams. Their whole hearted warm participation and performance in turn had made RIB's attempt successful.

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