Distant Volunteering in Digital era: Lessons from distant supervision for Rohingya Refugee Camp

Dr. Anis Ahmed, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, NHS UK
Chair Elect, Volunteering and International Psychiatrist Special Interest Group (ViPSiG) at RCPsych
24/06/21
Distance is new enabler
Tale of a Host Nation

Finding safe haven in Bangladesh

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have left their ethnic homeland of Rakhine State for the district of Cox’s Bazar in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Bangladesh sits on the edge of the Bay of Bengal, surrounded by the country of India. It is a crowded country with a large population for its size. The Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers flow down from the Himalaya Mountains and dominate the landscape. It is extremely flat which makes it prone to monsoon flooding and cyclones. The rich soil created by so much water is ideal for growing food, and two thirds of people work in farming. Rising sea levels caused by climate change are a real worry for Bangladesh because it is a very low-lying country.

Capital: Dhaka
Area: 145,998 sq km
Official language: Bengali (also known as Bangali), English
Climate: Tropical. Varies from a mild winter, hot, humid summer and warm, rainy monsoon season.
Population: 164,869,718 (July 2016 est.)
Population distribution: 38.4% of Bangladesh’s population live in urban areas (2011)
Money: 1 Taka = 100 P反腐hsa
Life expectancy: 69 years (men), 75 years (women)

The Big Issues

Poverty: 43.3% of people live in poverty.
Education: Only 51% of children in primary school complete a full five years.
Emergencies: Cyclone Sidr caused one of the country’s worst natural disasters in 2007, killing 10,000 people.
Women’s Rights: 64% of girls are married before their 18th birthday.
Land & Food: 33% of the population are at risk of hunger (70 million people).

ActionAid in Bangladesh

ActionAid started work in Bangladesh in 1983. Last year we helped over 130,000 people in poverty, especially women and girls, to claim their rights and prepare for natural disasters. For more information visit: http://pcoa/AABangladesh
Bangladesh sits on the edge of the Bay of Bengal, surrounded by the country of India. It is a crowded country with a large population for its size. The Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers flow down from the Himalaya Mountains and dominate the landscape. It is extremely flat which makes it prone to monsoon flooding and cyclones. The rich soil created by so much water is ideal for growing food, and two thirds of people work in farming. Rising sea levels caused by climate change are a real worry for Bangladesh because it is a very low-lying country.

**Capital**
- Dhaka

**Area**
- 143,998 sq km

**Official language**
- Bangla (also known as Bengali), English

**Climate**
- Tropical. Varies from a mild winter, hot, humid summer and warm, rainy monsoon season.

**Population**
- 166,280,712 (July 2014 est.)

**Population distribution**
- 28.4% of Bangladesh’s population live in urban areas (2011)

**Money**
- 1 Taka = 100 Poisha

**Life expectancy**
- 69 years (men), 73 years (women)

---

**THE BIG ISSUES***
**The Big Issues**

**Poverty**
43.3% of people live in poverty.

**Education**
Only 51% of children in primary school complete a full five years.

**Emergencies**
Cyclone Sidr caused one of the country’s worst natural disasters in 2007, killing 10,000 people.

**Women’s Rights**
65% of girls are married before their 18th birthday.

**Land & Food**
23% of the population are at risk of hunger (37 million people).
How can I help?

Distant volunteering

@Ani5Ahmed
MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS)

• “The composite term mental health and psychosocial support is used to describe any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental health conditions” Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)

• Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP)

  The mhGAP-IG provides evidence-based guidance and tools for the assessment and integrated management of priority MNS disorders in low and middle income countries (LMICs)

  Aimed at a non-specialized audience of primary care workers, but is also used by government ministries, non-governmental organizations and academic centres, to scale up mental health services in over 90 countries worldwide
Majority of Mental Health care in Self Care and Informal community

WHO: Optimal Mix of Services Pyramid
Well connected Flights
Highway to Haven?
Highway to Hell
1st Lesson

- Volunteer Preparedness
- Volunteer Shock
  - Stories that haunt
  - Own Self Care
  - Supervision
Mental Health Service Centre

- Psychological First Aid
- Psycho-Social Counseling
- Psychoterapy
- Stress Management

Supported by: Government of Denmark
2nd Lesson

- Field Visit
- Ecology
  - Facilities
  - Culture
  - Spirituality
  - Power Dynamics
MHPSS/mhGAP/ Task Sharing

• Supervision

• Motivation

• Performance cf Task Sharing

• Staff Wellbeing
• Learning Culture & Style
  • Dydactic
  • Passive Learning style
  • Supervision vs Teaching
  • Expectations
  • Role Clarity

3rd Lesson
A Rohingya refugee weeps as she holds a child after they were detained while crossing the India-Bangladesh fenced border from Bangladesh. Photo: Arindam Dey / AFP

4th Lesson: Psychopathology of human sufferings & Vicarious Trauma
Final Lesson

ahmedproj7@gmail.com
@Ani5Ahmed

Thank You

Be kind to those who flee...