

## A Girl Who Raise her Hands for Hygiene

At the very beginning of Rohingya crisis in Myanmar a little girl has crossed over the Bangladesh-Myanmar border with her parents in 1996. The situation was really critical, unrest and most vulnerable, where there is no guaranteed to survive and see the tomorrow morning. She was explained that, “it was the most memorable incident of her life when I was came to the registered Refugee Camp situated in Kutupalong, Teknaf.” She is an Eye-witness of the horrible torture of the military of Myanmar. She has fled from Myanmar, when she was only 5 years little girl. She and her parents have faced several times physical torture and mental harassments in Myanmar. After all the horrible incidents she and her parents have abled to take a little space to live alive in hill area of Naikhongchhari, Bandarban. However, after 3 years with support of UNHCR she and her family have taken a shelter in KTP RC and after all those tragedy happen again she started a new life in refugee camp with her parents. In 2011 her husband also left her and now she and her daughter Rubina Akter (15) are living in Kutupalong Registered refugee camp. However, after all the incidents now she is working for her community people to develop daily hygiene life in refugee camp of KTP RC.

Yes, I am talking about Kulsuma Khatun (29) who is living in D block of Kutupalong Refugee Registered Camp and now she is a role model as a ‘Hygiene Promotion Volunteer’ and very well-known to her community. When she was at early age, she was living with her parents in unhygienic and dirty environment, people even did not know how to use latrines proper way, women and young girls had not basic knowledge about menstrual hygiene and other personal hygiene issue. Kulsuma basically started her work 5 years ago in 2013 when she was working with ACF and that time she has seen refugee people are living in unhygienic environment as well as practice unhygienic way of their daily life and peoples are doing open defecation very frequently. Kulsuma took initiatives to change the society and people behavior the way of living.

However, in this hazardous situation NGO Forum for Public Health has been started a WASH project named ‘**Maintaining Access to Safe Water and Sanitation for Rohingyas in Bangladesh**’ with support of UNHCR in 2016 and end of the 2016 she has joined NGO Forum as a Hygiene Promotion Volunteer.



Figure 1: Kulsuma Khatun (29) Conducting Hygiene Session in KTP RC

Kulsuma Khatun is now working with NGO Forum since at. According to her words, at the early stage of 2017 the community people were involved in poor hygiene practice though there were a sufficient facilities in camp area. In her block D refugee people had not basic hygiene practice like open defecation, hand washing in 5 critical times, proper way latrines use, actually there was a huge lack of awareness of hygiene practice. Refugee's young and teenage girls as well as women were not also aware about menstrual hygiene and personal hygiene 2 years ago even they did not know how to care them during their period time. Most of the women in their period time had not proper knowledge about importance of menstrual hygiene, in this crucial time they mainly used unhygienic piece of cloths. However, community people also had lack of awareness to wash their hand after latrine use and open defecation happened very frequently, so that behind the scenario of hygiene side is poor. In that situation, Kulsuma has felt to change the community people behavior and hygiene practice and then she took challenge to change in her block. Kulsuma said, "It was not easy task to change them because refugee people were not interested to listen my words and sometimes they felt irritate and treat me negative with bad vibes, but I was never disappointed and committed to my job, again and again I try to tell them as well as convinced them, I never felt tired until they changed",



**Figure 2: Conducting Hygiene practice practically**

Kulsuma Khatun start her day at 8.30 am in NGO Forum office and then go to community people to take hygiene session with particular topic. In this hygiene session Kulsuma mainly discuss with people like sanitation, Environment & food, Personal & menstrual hygiene, hand washing and water safety plan. During her session time he discuss each and every topic and ask them if their have any query. After Hygiene Session 2.00 pm Kulsuma also do house hold visit and follow up the refugee's hygiene practice at regular basis.

Though she do her job very hardly for community people goodness, but she face a lot of challenges during her working time. She always try to create some good examples in her community hygiene side.

*"Most of young girl and women had not proper knowledge about menstrual hygiene, even they did not know how to use sanitary napkin during their period time," she said.*

She is always aware about the menstrual hygiene because she feel it's one of the significant biological process of female body, that's why she always try to tell the young girls and women how to care during their period time and also assist them menstrual hygiene is not secret and shame matter, it's a regular and very typical biological process of female body.

However, she not only work on it in her office time but also she also do discuss the importance of menstrual hygiene in off duty time while she is hand out with friends, family member and community people. She not only discuss the menstrual hygiene issue but also discussed to community people all kinds of hygiene related issue to community people living standard.

Meanwhile, Kulsuma also hope that *“I want to see my community people with healthy environment, where child will not do open defecation, no one will die for diarrhea because of poor hygiene practice, women and young girls will health conscious with proper menstrual hygiene practice”*.

This is the way how Kulsuma Khatun is working for people, for society and for her community and as well as helping to achieve the project goals and objectives. Her contributions, skills, dedications, concern, honesty and hard work became her as role model of Hygiene Promotion Volunteers to her community people, society and her working place NGO Forum. If we get more such kind of dedicated skill volunteers in camp areas, it will be easy and very helpful to improve poor hygiene practice as well as create healthy environment where people will do good hygiene practice in their daily life.