Project Completion Report
of
Colors of Kindness Pilot Project for UNHCR's Humanitarian Education Accelerator (HEA)

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of children around the world. Most importantly, as of 01 June 2020, it directly affects 1.2 billion students (68.0 percent of the world's total enrolled learners) who are directly affected due to the closure of educational institutions (UNESCO, 2020)[1]. The closures of schools, longer seeing off from their teachers and friends, and mandatory home quarantines have added stressors to households and thus interrupted their optimal mental and psychological development. The current global health crisis is negatively impacting the emotional well-being of children and their families. Governments and NGOs often lack appropriate content to support children and their families during this time and distance learning tools that can work in limited-resource and limited-connectivity settings.

Considering this global crisis and targeting to develop the overall mental and psychological condition of the children, Amal Alliance was granted UNHCR's Humanitarian Education Accelerator (HEA) award to create an education in emergencies prototype. Designed with IDEO, scripted with Global Dignity: Bangladesh, powered by UstadMobile, and funded by Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the program was successfully piloted by Friendship. The activities under the pilot project covered four schools: two Friendship-run schools, one government primary school (Friendship currently runs a program in this school as 'empowering girls through education, EGE'), and one Friendship run Learning Centre in Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar), comprising 137 students of different grades ranging from level 2 to 4. The activities were initiated from October 2020 and completed in the second week of December 2020. This report will narrate the activities, lessons provided to the students, challenges faced and learning takeaways.

Objectives of the Pilot Project

The ultimate objective of the initiative was to break the silence of the students with the use of an innovative EdTech solution for teachers due to the closure of the schools, and their detachment from

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[1]Uddin |, M. (2020, June 1). Effects of the pandemic on the education sector in Bangladesh. The Financial Express. https://www.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/effects-of-the-pandemic-on-the-education-sector-in-bangladesh-1592061447

formal schooling and mentoring, by ensuring some additional support to trigger their optimum mental and psychological development.
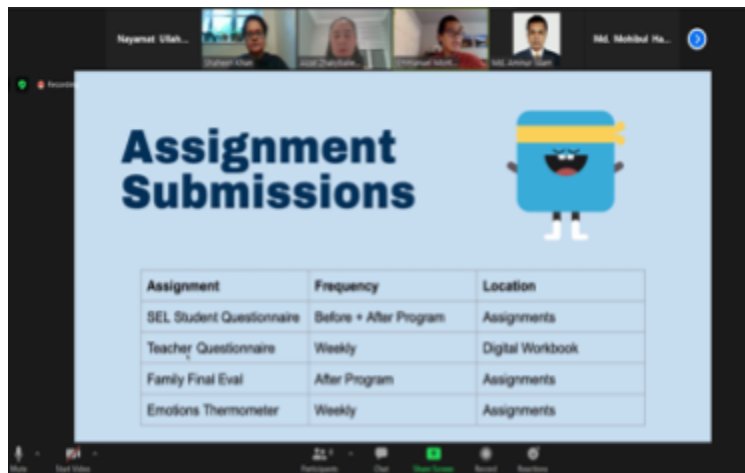
The following were the specified objectives of the pilot project:

a.   Increase the social and emotional skills (SEL) of children
b.   Increase the wellbeing of the caregivers and their children
c.   Increase access to and engagement with distance learning
d.   Encourage open-source adoption by other organizations

Implementation Pathways

Friendship has strictly followed the timeline and target set at the beginning of the pilot and completed all the assigned tasks within the deadline. A series of activities have been done within this period: At first 04 Friendship employees (02 from Friendship head office and 02 from Cox's Bazar field office) received Training of the Trainers (TOT) training directly from the Amal Alliance team and later, the trained employees conducted

Training for Friendship team by AMAL Alliance on 10.09.20

training of Friendship teachers in two separate locations. Besides day-long structured training provided by Amal Alliance, Friendship's project team also organized a few virtual sessions for the teachers for their clarity and a better understanding of the issues. Technology-based e-contents made the activity more innovative. The teachers initially took time to understand the entire application however, the practice helped them adapt very nicely and quickly.

Training for Field Team at FC, Gaibandha

Field Activities Going on at FPS, Sidhai, Gaibandha

Episodes and Activities

The application was built based on Amal Alliance's award-winning Rainbow of Education program, where episodes were conducted on topics related to the five core competencies of social and emotional learning (SEL) i.e., self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship building, and social awareness.

Covering the above-mentioned five competencies, Friendship has provided learning to the students on ten (10) episodes. Each of the episodes contained learnings from 12 guiding values of Friendship "Code of Ethics", physical exercises, and group works. Each episode was also firmly rooted in the Global Dignity approach, incorporating the 10 Essential Elements of Dignity. Every week, Amal Alliance uploaded new content and provided ongoing support where needed. The episodes are given below:

Week	Date	Episode	Theme
1	17-19 October	1	Identifying Emotions
2	24-25 October	2	Recognizing your uniqueness
3	31 October - 1 November	3	Managing your Emotions
4	7-8 November	4	Feeling Empowered
5	14-15 November	5	Setting your Goals
6	21-22 November	6	Making Responsible Decisions
7	25-26 November	7	Communicating Effectively
8	28-29 November	8	Honoring others
9	5-6 December	9	Empathy and Compassion
10	12-13 December	10	Appreciating Diversity

Friendship implemented the activities within the existing setup in its intervention areas. The teachers involved were from Friendship, teaching in the Friendship schools and running programs in government schools on the remote locations and Learning centers in the Rohingya Refugee Camp. The staff who helped throughout the project were either Friendship employees or staff who were implementing projects from different development partners, during the project period in the designated locations. Friendship also managed separate arrangements for the children in Rohingya camps where two Burmese Language Instructors (BLIs) were included to ensure language support during the session. The details of the number of students taking part in the program are given below:

SN	Name of School	Location	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	Remarks
1	Friendship Primary School	Sidhai, Gaibandha	28	2	
2	Friendship Primary School	Jatrapur, Kurigram	29	2	
3	Bakurchar Govt. Primary School	Madarganj, Jamalpur	42	2	02 Education Facilitators (EF) from EGE project
4	Learning Centre	Camp-7, Ukhia, Cox's Bazar	38	4	02 National Teachers (NTs) and 02 Burmese Language Instructors (BLIs)
		Total	137	10	

Gender Considerations

Gender inclusivity was considered throughout the entire design and implementation process. In the research phase, it became evident that not all households had access to mobile phones, and even in those that did, screen access for girls was not guaranteed. Therefore, our modified delivery model via teachers in both formal and nonformal settings ensured that female learners receive quality instruction. Girls accounted for more than half of our sample with 83 female learners receiving our SEL content. In addition, 7 of the 10 teachers were female, who could create and maintain an inclusive group environment.

Impacts on the Learners

Qualitative Data:

| Table 1 Student SEL Assessment (Summary)		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	21.15	24.63
Median	21	25
Mode	20	30
SD	2.95	4.35

Colors of Kindness has shown to positively influence learning outcomes. We administered to each child before and after the program a questionnaire to measure change in social and emotional (SEL)

competency. Students could score a minimum of -20 and a maximum of 30, with higher scores indicating higher SEL competency. The pre-test returned a mean of 21.15 (SD = 2.95), while the post-test returned a mean of 24.63 (SD = 4.35) (see Table 1). This shows a 16.5% increase in SEL competency amongst the children who participated in our program, an outcome corroborated by other data points. While the mean scores increased for the Bakurchar (17.3%), Char Jatrapur (39.2%), and LC7 (14.2%) cohort, it is interesting to note that the Sidhai cohort saw a decrease of -4.3% in its mean score. We suspect this anomaly to be attributed to external environmental factors that can negatively affect psychosocial functioning and information retention. While 98% of caregivers said that their child has been more anxious or irritable since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 99% of caregivers reported that their child's mood had improved after completing the program. In addition, all the teachers indicated that this program was beneficial for both the children and themselves. Given the short nature of the pilot, such a change is quite remarkable. These outcomes suggest that impact could be even more remarkable should the program length be extended past 10 weeks.
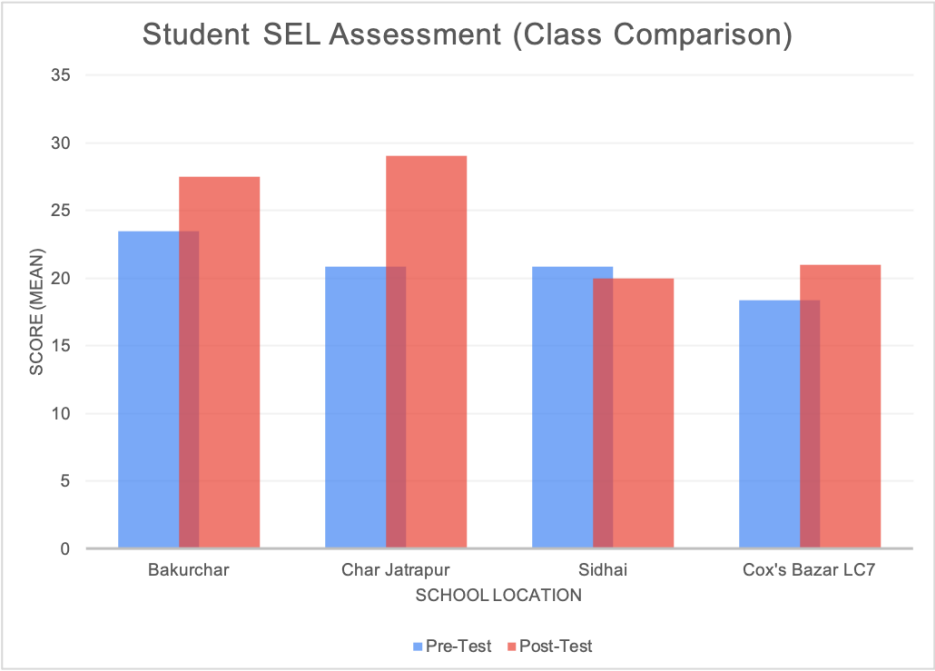
Amal Alliance developed a comprehensive M&E framework that includes 3 surveys: Student SEL Assessment (Pre/Post), Teacher Weekly Questionnaire, and Family Member Final Evaluation (see Annex B). Such a framework provided us with quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate from different perspectives the following indicators:

Recorded Usage:
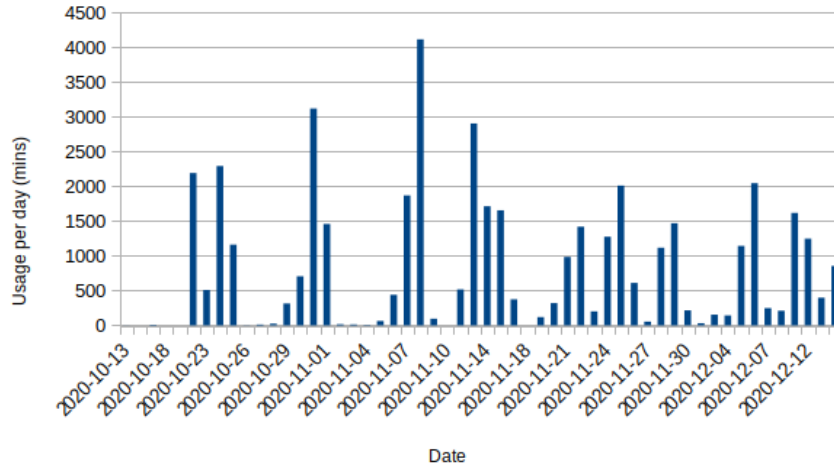
The Ustad Mobile app logged 923 hours of usage consisting of 8,775 events (page views, listening to audio, answering questions, etc). This demonstrates that teachers used the app extensively, and the app was able to capture detailed usage information. The application data supports the conclusion that outcome improvements are attributable to the intervention.

Qualitative Data:

Throughout the episode cycle, the project has provided lots of learning and interactive sessions, i.e. physical exercises, posture development, ethical lessons, emotion management, to allow the children to bring some positive feelings and attitude to enhance their wellbeing.

According to the teachers, most of the episodes were excellently developed, targeting the desired objectives and the students also enjoyed it a lot. The teachers also mentioned that the students found Episode 10 to be the most enjoyable as it covered flag games with different songs, a lot of physical exercises, and group activities. This semi-formal arrangement had a multiplier impact on the life and behavior of the children as they shared the learnings at home with their family members and friends. The lessons that the teachers and students learned are mentioned below:

a. The children, who were stuck at home for months due to the pandemic, finally had an activity with their friends and teachers to look forward to. This gave them breathing space and helped them manage their feelings and trauma that were put forth due to the pandemic.

b. The project worked as a catalyst for preparing the students for formal schooling after a pandemic, as it taught them how to sit in a class maintaining social distances in a pandemic situation.

c. The lessons made the students well-oriented with e-contents and distance learning methods.

d. This learning will help the students to be empathetic with others' sorrows and worst happenings/situations.

e. The lessons increased the responsible decision-making skills of the students that they can apply in their real life

f. The teachers received training and experience in operating well-oriented, technology-based e-contents

g. The teachers gained experience and were made aware of the benefits of activity-based learning sessions

Challenges Faced

Considering the nature of the activity and the geographical status, Friendship faced problems regarding fast and smooth internet connectivity. The episodes were automatically uploaded in the application by Amal Alliance into the UstadMobile Learning Management System, but the teachers needed to download them on their respective android tablets before the session for personal preparation and conduction. They faced problems in getting them uninterruptedly.

Comments from Students and Teachers

Participation in this podcast session made the students truly pleased and they enjoyed a happy time with their fellow mates and teachers. Most of the students believed that, due to this pandemic, they couldn't come to the school and meet and play with their friends. With this session, they had a lovely time where they learned a lot from the Color of Kindness games and activities, especially travelling in clouds of many colors and getting tokens. The students mentioned that they demonstrated these activities and exercises to their siblings at home and everyone was amused. The teachers mentioned that they took this as a learning opportunity with new approaches and it also brought refreshment to their minds during this pandemic. As Ms. Bithi Afrin Sathi, a teacher of this podcast program expressed her feelings this way, "I was really pleased after participating in this program as I have tried my best to teach my students and I also learned a lot".

The parents and community members also embraced this very positively as they found it a new opportunity of learning for their children during this pandemic where other children were stuck in their homes for a long time due to the closure of schools and restricted movements.

Conclusion

Despite several encounters and technical impediments, the pilot project is complete within the specified timeline successfully. The students who joined the lessons mentioned that they want such interactive programs in their regular school activities. Friendship will be looking forward to future collaboration and replication to reach more students as this project, even though focused on remote schooling for piloting, has great components to improve students' social and emotional learning in the future.

Photo Gallery

Students are paying their full attention during a group activity at Friendship Primary School, Sidhai, Gaibandha

Rohingya children are participating in a group activity at Learning Centre under Camp-7

Group activity is going on with students of a Govt. Primary School under the EGE project at Madarganj, Jamalpur

Students are acting in Airplane Posture at Friendship Primary School, Sidhai, Gaibandha

Teachers is giving his introductory outline before the session starts at the Learning Centre under camp-7	Girls are in Tree Posture at Bakurchar Govt. Primary School, Madarganj Jamalpur

Studnets are in front of the Learning Centre at Ukhia, Cox'sBazar