



# QSA Notes

## Refugee Amir is an Ideal Permaculturist

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ALL PHOTOS BY BASD



I am **Amir Ali** (35 years old), living in Cox's Bazar Rohingya Camp No. 19 in Bangladesh since August, 2017. Before starting this camp life, I was growing up in a very respected family in Myanmar with parents, 7 brothers and 8 sisters. Although our family was large, we were living happily: there was no tension for food, clothing and necessities. I worked few years in Malaysia before coming to Bangladesh, so our family was very happy and respected. When we came to Bangladesh, all family members could not come at one time, they came at different times and enrolled in three different camps and locations in Cox's Bazar.

In 2018, luckily I was listed by BASD Staff for a Permaculture Follow-up project. Then, with 25 other refugees, I received 14 days Permaculture Design Course (PDC) by Rosemary Morrow from Australia. In the training session I was very attentive and keen to

learn more and more, and I was named as a creative man. Then I was selected as a Community Volunteer of BASD in Camp No. 19. I tried to educate the refugee youth, men and women whole heartedly what I had learned from the PDC and Rosemary. I also started a small Permaculture garden near my home, beside the tent.

As a Community Volunteer (CV), I guided 15 other CVs in Camp No. 19. CVs were working among 1,500 families in that Camp and helping them for permaculture gardening, waste management, composting, planting home-based medicinal plants in pots or hanging. Gradually Camp No. 19 was transformed into a mini Permaculture Farm. I feel and understand that the PDC changed my life and lifestyle, gave me an aim and destination in my life.

I began educating my neighbour families after the PDC which I never did at Myanmar. I was thinking

of developing a slightly bigger permaculture garden. I was searching for land among the neighboring Bengali families. I got a lease of 120 decimal lands [about 1.2 acres] from a family. I invited 5 refugee youths who attended the PDC and jointly started gardening. We are now cultivating varieties of seasonal vegetables round the year. We are eating vegetables from the garden, distributing to the communities and selling the surplus in the market. Many are coming now to our garden for learning and visiting. We are really very happy now, as we are proudly producing, it gave us happiness and peace in our mind, it gave us respect in the society. We wish to teach more refugee youths, men and women including children in our camp and other camps in the future. Thanks for the great assistance and cooperation from BASD and education from Rosemary didi, Ruth didi and Jed bhai, and funding support from QSA.



Amir Ali at his vine-covered home (left), and working on his leased land (above).

## COVID-19 and other QSA supported communities

### JACKIE PERKINS, QSA COORDINATOR

For those Friends who follow QSA's projects in QSA Notes and the website, you may be wondering how they are coping with the pandemic. Ai Leen is in regular contact with the project partners in India and Uganda, and Fleur, our new staff member, is keeping in contact with our partners in Cambodia. All have reported stay-at-home rules, which are in some areas being enforced with brutal beatings if not adhered to. On the other hand, stress and anxiety levels in the home are generating a big increase in family violence. Obviously all training workshops which had been planned are not able to happen, but QSA has been very impressed by the flexibility shown

by our co-funder the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the care and brave willingness of all of our partners to continue supporting their communities during this difficult time. The remaining funds in the projects have been 'pivoted' to address COVID-19 so that posters, radio broadcasts and public announcements about frequent hand washing, keeping distance from non-family members and other more localised instructions can be shared in the remote rural areas, as well as distributing soap, hand sanitiser and face masks purchased in the country, many made locally. Project partner staff in preparing for this and new ideas have continued to receive a wage so that they and their families can buy food.

No one knows what the future holds, but as our project partner staff

in Cambodia, India, Bangladesh, and Uganda are permitted with precautions, they can visit individual households of project participants and their neighbours. By adjusting quickly to the evolving situation our project partners are facing, QSA can continue to make an effective contribution to addressing these problems faced by the communities under the constraints posed by COVID-19.

As a reminder, any donations greater than \$2 to QSA are now fully tax deductible, and we encourage Friends who are more fortunately situated to consider what additional support they may be able to give to help QSA continue to support these communities in need.

We're all in this together!

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

Find us on Facebook for more photos and stories: [facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia](https://facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia).

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