



## Rosma: nurturing knowledge and hope

For more than 20 years Rosma has shaped the lives and development of children in Malaysia. Now, she has taken on her biggest teaching challenge to date and, thanks to the support of the Educate A Child (EAC) Programme and the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), is improving the lives and future prospects of Rohingya refugee children living in Malaysia...

“When we set up a year ago we had 57 children enrolled. Now we have 120 and I know more families will begin to send their children,” explains Rosma.

“Many of these students were beggars before this school opened and now they are not. Without this school these children would have no proper schooling – they would be out there. Education is the most important thing. Without education you are nowhere and they need this school.”

Rosma is the passionate head teacher of the Rohingya Education Centre in Klang, Malaysia. The school, established only thanks to the support of EAC, is providing a primary education to Rohingya children, many of whom have had little or no access to formal schooling.

### Thanks to the Educate A Child Programme:

- 120 Rohingya refugee children enrolled at school, many for the first time ever
- Building renovated, textbooks, stationery, whiteboards, desks and chairs purchased for a well-equipped school

“Educated people are much respected and accepted by the community, the world even. This is important. It’s their right to have a good education. One day, they will go back to their own country and hopefully develop programmes like this and help their own people who have not been as lucky as them.”

“These children are bright children, they pick up our language very fast,” says Rosma “Most of them have not been to school before in Arakhine [Myanmar] so when they come here they are anxious to get more knowledge but it is a challenge.”



Azima in her science class

## Helping children stand tall, without fear

The Rohingya people, a Muslim minority in their native country of Myanmar have been persecuted by the ruling authorities for more than 50 years. Increased inter-communal violence over the past few years has forced many Rohingya to risk the dangerous sea crossings to Thailand, Bangladesh and Malaysia.

Rosma and the six other teachers at the school follow the Malaysian syllabus, teaching children between the ages of 6 and 17 a basic primary school curriculum. The children are at varying levels of ability and classes often have various age groups in one grade. Many of the children are terribly shy and the teachers work hard to try and instill a sense of self-worth and confidence.

“I teach them not just Bahasa language, English, mathematics, science... we do much more than that. At this school we are teaching them to be more human, to be good people, to not fear or be shy but to stand tall and see what they want and to express their feelings. I want them to give their opinions without fear.”

“Maybe the challenge is wondering what the children will become one day and if our expectations are too high. I want them to be leaders, doctors, can they be? Do I have the strength to help them to become what we know they can become? Maybe we need to give more. I can give basic education from year one through to seven. But these children are growing and they need more than the subjects we can give them. 15 and above, how long will they have to stay in a primary school?”

## Improving lives with education

13 year old Azima is just one student benefitting from Rosma’s passion and dedication. A recent arrival from Arakhine state in Myanmar, she has been coming to the school for just four months.

“My parents came first to Malaysia and then sent for me to join them,” says Azima. “I came by boat there were a lot of people on it. It took 6 days. I was afraid on the boat – I was alone and there was a lot of water so I was afraid.”

“When I first came here I was scared because I don’t know the roads, I don’t know the language, I don’t know the people. It has been hard but it is getting easier. It was a strange country and different to home.”

Rosma explains that Azima is doing well in her classes and has very quickly picked up Bahasa Malaysian. Her father, who works as a labourer, was insistent that Azima receive a good education, the only thing he can offer to improve her future.

Like all of the other children at the centre, Azima received a UNHCR school starter kit, including a school bag, books and uniform. The EAC programme also covers the cost of transport to and from the school, something most families cannot afford to pay for and one of the main reasons attendance rates were so low.

“I came to school four months ago. I wasn’t afraid and I am so pleased to learn. I am not scared here. I like studying and science is my favourite subject,” says Azima. “I want to go back to Arakhine because that is my home country – when I go back I want to study and work as a teacher.”

## Dreams for a better future

“Teaching is something that is in my blood,” says Rosma. “I enjoy teaching, to convey knowledge. These students are just like my own children, I have five children, and it’s not different to be with them and to teach them. I want to see them be knowledgeable people.”

“My dreams are their dreams. Hopefully these children can go on from here – to higher education and a better future – that is what I would like to see. We are so grateful to EAC for helping us to set up this beautiful school for these beautiful children.”

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### About UNHCR

For six decades, UNHCR has helped save lives, restore hope and rebuild futures. As we strive to bring protection and solutions to millions of refugees around the world, some of the world’s leading corporations are helping us have maximum impact, providing an opportunity for collaborating together on initiatives that serve both their social and business interests.

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