GROWING IN CRISIS - THE COSTS, BENEFITS AND TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF FOOD GROWING IN COX'S BAZAR

Evidence from a community-rooted study on nutrition, dignity, and self-reliance in displacement

re-alliance

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Cover Image: In densely populated areas like Cox's Bazar, organisations like BASD encourage residents to grow in whatever spaces they can, including on rooftops and along fences.

1. Executive Summary

In 2023, the World Food Programme's decision to cut cash transfers from $12 to $8 per person per month created an urgent need for alternative food security strategies. In response to the funding cuts, and in a bid to promote self-reliance, many aid agencies increased their focus on developing and supporting home gardens to help people supplement their diets.

Between 2023 and 2025 a small team from Re-Alliance, a UK based network, and from The Asian University for Women conducted a small research project, in collaboration with the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster at Cox's. This looked at the impact of new and previously established gardens on people's well-being and nutrition, as well as the costs and benefits of the different approaches used. By surveying agencies conducting projects and interviewing home growers, it tries to assess their relative value to household income and nutrition. The findings provide evidence-based recommendations for implementing agencies and donors seeking to optimise food security interventions in refugee settings.

In common with many earlier cost benefit analyses of humanitarian work, this research encountered similar problems of inaccurate or differential reporting of inputs, expenditure and results by different organisations. In emergency or rapidly changing situations with frequent handover of personnel, regular and consistent evaluation is often lost among other priorities. The camps in Cox's Bazar are one of the most densely populated in the world, and subject to flooding, ongoing changes in weather patterns and fluctuations in donor priorities.

Availability of space proves a serious challenge, and the dwellings constructed lack a structure strong enough to support sufficient plant growth in vertical gardens which are best suited to small spaces. Organisations supporting gardens in both host and camp communities identified a significantly higher yield in host community gardens due to them having more space, better soils and better access to tools, seeds and water, an indication of what could be done in camps, given proper infrastructure.

Nonetheless a simple cost benefit such as this one does show that annual expenditure per household, while varying significantly between organisations, is equivalent to the cost of between one and 5 months of cash transfers or food baskets. While none of the gardens were sufficient to replace food baskets on their own, they were certainly able to supplement these and offer additional income to families during periods of the year, enabling them to buy additional food stuffs. Additionally, organisations reporting a higher cost per household on training and garden setup, also reported a higher yield, with Action Aid for example, spending 27.6 USD per household, but with average yields of 195 kg. Concern's budget by comparison was 11.5 USD per household, but with average annual yields of only around 7-10 kg. The most basic conclusion is that money spent on gardening initiatives is money well spent.

An additional community organisation whose results were compared to those of the cluster, showed significantly higher yields. They used a cascade training model to train trainers in permaculture and provided small startup grants. Their 72 hour, in depth training, offered an understanding of how to properly design and cultivate in small places with few resources. Their yields, after 5 years, were sufficient to consume and to market, providing cash to purchase other nutritional foods. While the small-scale outputs of a community organisation cannot match the large numbers of gardens supported by INGOs, they do offer continuity of personnel, thorough local knowledge and lower overheads, which ultimately translate into good value for money.

As cuts in overseas aid and food subsidies globally are accompanied by increasing incidences of climate and conflict migration, large INGOs are having to rethink their approach. Supporting the work of small community-based organisations and sharing knowledge between them offers one way to decrease dependency and increase self-reliance.

2. Introduction

Historically gardens have provided resilient food and nutrition security for garden owners during times of economic crisis and food shortages (Barthel et al., 2015, Warren et al., 2015). The cultivation of food in refugee camps and settlements has been in existence for over a hundred years and there is documented evidence of food growing in internment camps in the first and second world wars. When fresh food is limited people have looked for ways to source or to cultivate their own. However, in the past two decades and with increasing constraints and reductions in the availability of humanitarian assistance, INGOs have been looking at ways to introduce food production into the refugee camps they are supporting. UNHCR and the Sphere Guidelines both stipulate provision of 'A minimum

surface area of 45 sqm per person, which includes 15 sqm allocated for household gardening which should be included in the site plan from the outset'[1].

This report outlines the results of a research project undertaken in collaboration with the Food Security Cluster in Cox's Bazar, (an extensive Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh), by Re-Alliance, (a UK network supporting regenerative approaches to disaster and displacement). It looks at the costs and benefits of home gardening initiatives undertaken in different parts of the camp over the past three years in order to report back to the implementing organizations regarding their contribution to the provision of food.

While there is a growing awareness that assisting refugees to start their own small gardens could be a low-cost way to improve dietary diversity in precarious situations there has till now been no systematic analysis of the impacts this has had. Numerous kitchen and home gardens have been developed and financially supported on a range of different models, and while some of these have been successful, there has been no recorded correlation between the cost of establishing these and the outputs they have produced.

By contacting those organisations and requesting budgets and reports, conducting a simple cost benefit analysis of the different approaches and their results, and following this up with small scale empirical research, this research sought to shed light on the following questions:

1. How many gardens are still being effectively used and what are the key factors in them being established and maintained?
2. How do the costs, inputs and approaches used by different organisations affect overall success?
3. What benefits were perceived by households in terms of food security and diversity of diet?
4. What benefits were perceived by gardeners in terms of health, mental health and well-being?
5. How does the budget for establishing and maintaining gardens compare with the cost of Cash Transfers and Food Baskets and what are the additional benefits of a kitchen garden programme.

3. Background and Context

Global funding cuts at the World Food Program, cash assistance to Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, was decreased to $8/month ($0.27/day) in June 2023, barely enough to buy a small amount of rice and cooking oil with a notable decrease in nutrition levels among children. Assistance was increased again to $10/month in January 2024, and $11 in May 2024, returning to $12.50 in August, alongside the provision of fortified rice, as a bare minimum needed for survival. However, recent natural disasters, poor harvests and

[1]https://sswm.info/sites/default/files/reference_attachments/UNHCR%202015c%20Camp%20Planning%20Standards%20(Planned%20Settlements).pdf

rising food prices led to predictions of acute hunger across at least one quarter of the population at the end of 2024[2].

The Rohingya in Bangladesh rely entirely on international aid for their food and nutrition, unlike some refugee camps in other parts of the world whose host governments often participate in providing land or essential needs. This leaves the Rohingya entirely dependent on an aid organization for their survival.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported that between 2022-2023 the number of refugees without proper food intake rose from 44% - 70%, which we can assume has only risen as a direct result of these budget cuts. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system, which is used to improve food security and nutrition analysis, 77% of Rohingya currently exist in phase 3, or “Crisis. Acute malnutrition is increasing, and hunger-related mortality is incredibly high, especially in children.

The camp and its location also present huge challenges for food growing. Despite recent greening initiatives, earlier deforestation in the areas has resulted in risk of landslides particularly during monsoon when raising vegetable seedlings is also difficult due to continuous heavy rainfall.

Whether or not the investment in gardens was sufficiently successful to warrant this investment, is an important question.

4. Relevant Findings from Existing Research

It is not easy to secure reliable data on food security investments and benefits and historically the literature has shown how other attempts to conduct cost-benefit analyses of food aid interventions in camps have been of limited value. This is in part due to the inconsistency of evaluations conducted in the humanitarian sector. The complexity of refugee settings makes comprehensive cost-benefit analyses nearly impossible, and there are several structural barriers.

Allocating land to refugees for home cultivation has shown promising results. Research in Uganda indicates that providing agricultural land to refugees significantly improves their welfare and self-reliance (Zhu et al. 2022) where the total impact of combining land access with cash aid creates substantial economic benefits, exceeding output traditionally found through aid costs. However, offering new communities’ significant areas of land for cultivation involves political and logistical challenges, particularly regarding land availability and host community relations. The space and conducive environment in Uganda has rarely been matched elsewhere.

The potential of producing adequate food from a small plot should also not be overstated. A study on food security and home gardens in South African homesteads analysed data from 140 growers on what role their own garden plays in household food security. Only 10% of households were found to be completely food secure. Of the rest, 39% experienced

[2] US Relief Agency (USAID) chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/2025-12-20_USG_Bangladesh_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_1.pdf

hunger that affected everyone in the household and 51% were at risk of hunger. Despite the fact that 72% of the respondents planted vegetables or fruits, the gardens did not contribute substantially to food security and mostly bought their food, with subsequent food shortages when they did not have enough money.

5. Research Methods Used in Cox's Bazar

This research was conducted as a collaboration between Re-Alliance (www.re-alliance.org), the WFP Food Cluster coordinator for the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and an academic from the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Chittagong. It comprised two stages - a survey of organizations who had implemented home-garden initiatives in Cox's Bazar and carried out in October 2023 and a piece of empirical research conducted by a group of Rohingya students from AUW in July 2024.

The survey was designed in collaboration with the Food Security Cluster who were asked to provide general information regarding their programs to help build survey materials. This was subsequently sent out to those conducting food growing projects in Cox's with 15 survey responses (as indicated in the table below), though the amount of information returned varied in depth and content. A copy of the survey instrument is included in appendix 1.

Based on the results of the survey an empirical, mixed-methods approach was designed which included individual household interviews and transect walks. The questionnaire, designed to support semi structured household interviews is included in appendix 2. Data collection took place over a 4-day period in July 2024, by 4 female Rohingya university students, who currently live in the camps and all interviews took place in the Rohingya language and were later translated into English for analysis. All 4 students had been trained in qualitative data collection at university and attended a review workshop in preparation for this project. Interviews were conducted with 6 of the responding organisations, as illustrated by the green shading in the table below.

Although there was an unavoidable delay between the two activities caused by instability in the area over that time, this enabled field researchers to see for themselves which gardens were still in operation by the time they visited and to discover more about the benefits of the yields they had produced.

6. Limitations of this Research

The initial survey, conducted with the support of the food security cluster, depended on the accuracy of information held by implementing partners and their willingness to share it with us. The aims of the survey were presented several times at cluster meetings, and all organisations contacted did return their survey sheets as requested. However, information supplied was patchy, an indication perhaps of the quality of data secured from irregular evaluation reports conducted in a high-pressure crisis environment. Survey responses included the use of different criteria, (such as cost per programme, cost per garden or cost per hectare, despite the specificity of the question) and were based on data gathered at different points in the year, thus relaying different types of information around planting,

harvesting and consumption. Some reported on yield per garden, and some per camp or community (refugee or host), and while attempts have been made to verify and confirm these, not every organisation has since responded. Survey questions around feedback from growers and success of the project were invariably positively reported, outlining a few individual problems with particular crops and itemising additional training, input or support needs. However, this appears more as an indication of their keenness for further inputs rather than a critical evaluation of how far the programme was successful.

The follow up interviews were conducted by Rohingya students selected due to their ability to access the camp (as they were registered as living there and resident during the vacations) and their ease of communication with growers, most of whom were also Rohingya women. Field visits, planned for December 2023 were postponed on many occasions due to instability in the area preventing them from returning home, and were eventually conducted in July 2024. However, despite the researchers receiving specific training prior to undertaking fieldwork from their lecturer (who is also part of the research team), answers to the questions in the most part were brief, and they lacked the time for triangulation of results or extensive focus group discussions.

Although the students were known locally, they were still seen as representing those NGOs implementing gardens or able to fund more inputs in the future. This further contributed to them asking for more of anything in the future, (funding, tools, seeds and training) rather than engaging in a detailed discussion of benefits and constraints.

Nonetheless the results indicate an overall keenness to continue the project, a strong appreciation for fresh food and multiple other psychosocial benefits of green spaces and results are useful when seen in context with other studies conducted elsewhere on the dietary benefits of home gardens and gardening in displacement.

7. Results of the Research

Information held by the Food Security Cluster showed that in 2022 there were already 10 implementing partners and well over 1,000 separate small gardening projects, supported by:

Organisation	**Number of Projects**
United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)	355
World Food Programme (WFP)	329
Concern Worldwide (CWW)	221
Bangladesh Rehabilitation and Assistance Committee (BRAC)	102
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)	106

Helvetas	50
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	7
Prantic	2

During the same year implementing partners included:

Organisation	**Number of Projects**
BRAC	379
SARPV	221
Mukti	160
Shushilan	108
CODEC	89
CNRS	84
World Vision	70
Helvetas	50
DRC	6
Prantic	2

Although recorded data does not show amounts invested by each donor, the table below indicates that USAID in particular was a key supporter of home gardening, support which has since disappeared.

In 2022, the following donors supported the following quantity of projects, with 355 projects using pooled funding:

Donor	Number of Projects
USAID	698
USG/BPRM	221
Dutch Embassy	106
GA Canada	101
GIZ	50
Danida	6
WV Hong Kong	4
WV NZ	2
UKAID	2
OBAT Inc USA	2

A partner update circulated in August 2021 states an intention to move strategically towards developing self-reliance in the Rohingya population and with WFP shifting to delivering gardening inputs rather than food baskets. This makes the claim that 'Homestead gardening increases household access to high quality nutritious food and improves dietary diversity' (op. cit. partner update 2021).

By October 2023, when this research began, there were more than 15 implementing partners. While data reports on the number of gardens, rather than the number of projects, there were, between the different organisations, 63,000 different gardens reported as being established during this season alone.

A comparison of the numbers, per implementing partner, costs (in BDT and USD) and reported yields is included in the table below. There is also an estimated cost per household arrived at by dividing the total spend between the numbers of gardens recorded. Many of the organisations counted this as the total costs of the project, which included training and inputs. The only organisation providing a start-up cash grant was Plan International, who gave this via FIVDB, YIPSA and BITA as implementing partners.

Organisation	Costs of project BDT	Cost USD	Numbers of Gardens	Cost per garden	Yield per household *(average)*	Organic	Still operating?
Action Aid	336,000.00	276k	10, 000	27.6 USD	195kg	Yes	Yes
BRAC	97,075.00	80k	15,000	5.4 USD	180kg	Yes	Yes
Concern (BRPM)	1,47,61,890	121k	10,323	11.7 USD	7-10kg	Yes	Mostly
Concern (SARPV)	1,51,25,110	124k	10,577	11.7 USD	8-12k	Mostly	Mostly
Dan Church	72810181	60k	5,000	12 USD	50 – 60kg	Yes	4988
ESDO	10,0000	8k	200	41 USD	80 – 100kg	Yes	Yes
FAO (Mukti)	14,96650	12k	1000	12 USD	25-35k	Yes	50%
FIVDB	7,130.00	6k	200	30 USD	145 host 105 camp	Yes	Yes
Helvetas (Prottyashi)	10,336,000	84k	12160	7 USD	N/A	Yes	Yes
Helvetas (Uttaran)	10,336,000	84k	12160	7 USD	N/A		Yes
Mukti	44080	36k	6500	5.5 USD	626kg camp 1328 kg host	Yes	Yes

Some survey results gave confused messages, such as suggesting a permaculture approach with organic and synthetic inputs, suggesting that while an organic or permaculture approach may have been important to the organisations delivering the training, participants were keen to take whatever advice or input was available.

Some gardens also reported unrealistic high yields which indicate they may be measuring yields across the project rather than in individual gardens. Those which recorded a lower number still operating, had provided training (specified as ‘relevant’, RDRS) and training in 6 production methods and seed preservation FAO Mukti). Interestingly the Mukti projects not supported by FAO recorded 100% still operating.

Feedback from Survey Participants via Organisational Reports

- Satisfied with the input support and hands-on training programme - Action Aid
- Need support to produce leafy vegetable, need raw materials to produce organic solution to use as pesticides - BRAC

- Participants are happy to collect & eat vegetables from their own garden, - Camp beneficiaries know how to cultivate vegetables in a tiny space. - They learn different methods for cultivations. - Harvest organic vegetable from their own garden - Participants preserved seeds for next seasons - BRPM/SARPV/Concern WW
- Beneficiaries were very satisfied with the activities. Most of the beneficiaries were engaged in the activities delightfully. The production from their own gardening helped them to fulfil their regular need for vegetables. Some beneficiaries also mentioned that they have shared this vegetable to their relatives, neighbours and friends and sometimes even sold the vegetables in the market. According to them this initiative not only capacitates them with skill but also influences positive well-being. Some of the female beneficiaries in the female headed family stated that the little incentives they are getting for the activities help them for economic empowerment to some extent. Other than this, different activities in a team like training, cooking and feeding demonstration help them to learn the importance of teamwork and unity. – Dan Church
- They are happy to see the production – ESDO
- Continue support of seeds and vermicompost (soil), especially bamboo, and seed preservation techniques - FAO Mukti
- Both camp and host beneficiaries' express great satisfaction in enjoying the fresh vegetables they have grown themselves in their homestead. This not only addresses nutritional deficiencies but also contributes to increased family income - Mukti
- Quality agricultural inputs are not available at his area but price of producing vegetable is higher than other areas of the country - FIVDB
- We are happy with vegetable production. The IGA on vegetable cultivation was very helpful and great learning for us. Our income has gradually increased, and now we have a safe informed source - RDRS

Field Research

Of the 15 organisations who responded to the survey, 6 were ultimately interviewed in the second stage of the research based on where the individual households participated. These constituted 4 WFP funded organizations were included (Dan Church, Action Aid, Mukti Cox's Bazar, BRAC) as well as Concern International (BRPM) and World Vision.

For this primary data collection, 159 households were interviewed, and of these 93% of gardens were still in use at the time of this project. Interviewees consisted of, mostly female, heads of individual households in camps 1-5 and 13-17. At the time of the interviews 7 months had passed since the projects finished, apart from Concern International, which was almost 1 year after their conclusion.

How long after initial project was each garden seen

Organisation	**Timeline**	**Time since garden implemented**
Dan Church	Feb. 23 - Dec. 23	7 months
Action Aid	Feb. 23 - Dec. 23	7 months
Mukti	Jan. 23 - Dec 23	7 months

BRAC	Feb. 23 - Dec. 23	7 months
Concern	Sept. 22 - Aug. 23	11 months
World Vision	April 22 - Dec. 23	7 months

All organizations gave money directly to their participants in addition to inputs and training, and financial contributions were reported as ranging from approximately 7.000tk to 14.562tk per household/garden, over unspecified time periods. However, the amounts received as reported by the participants were dramatically different and ranged from 150 tk – 6000 tk, over different time periods.

The table below identifies the cost per household per garden.

How much was spent per household by each organization

Dan Church	72,810,181/5,000 = 14,562tk	119 USD
Action Aid	33,600,000/10,000 = 3,360tk	27.62 USD
Mukti	44,080 (BNF)/6,500 = 7.000tk	54.00 USD
BRAC	97,075,000/15,000 = 6,472tk	53.21 USD
Concern	14,761,890/10,323 = 1,430tk	11.76 USD
World Vision	3,500,000/2,000 = 1,750tk	14.39 USD

According to the survey results training was provided across the board by each organisation. The majority reported as lasting 5 trainings or days by the organizations. However, interview results reported that individuals' experience of receiving training ranged from none at all to 5 hours.

Amount of training offered by whom

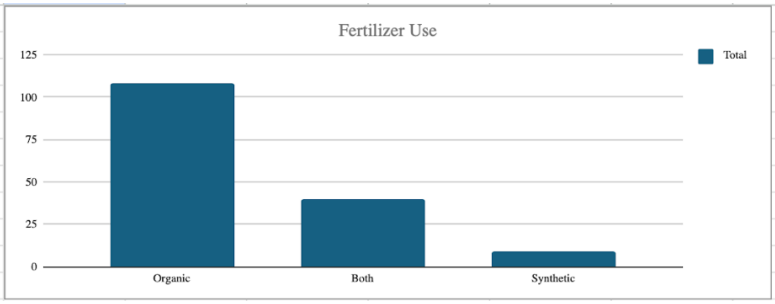
Dan Church	5 modules
Action Aid	5 days including coaching
Mukti	4-5 trainings
BRAC	5 trainings
Concern	(30 min - 2 hours from participants)
World Vision	(1 hour from participants)

The main benefit reported from the trainings were the new gardening approaches learned. These included, but were not limited to, organic farming protocols, hand pollination, pest management, vertical and container gardening, soil and seed preparation, water saving

techniques, and fertilizer and pesticide use. The table below shows the use of organic or synthetic fertilizer used, with a significant number claiming to use both.

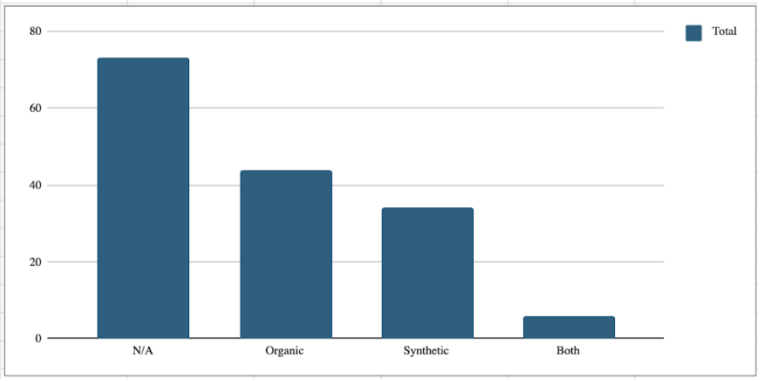
Organic/synthetic

Fertilizer	
Organic	108
Both	40
Synthetic	9



Pesticide use also varied with the majority claiming they did not use any, probably because of its lack of availability. A small number used both but organic was favoured above synthetic, again due to it being provided by organisations to their participants. Synthetic fertiliser is often unavailable in vulnerable areas.

Pesticides	
N/A	73
Organic	44
Synthetic	34
Both	6



A large variety of vegetables were grown using the new techniques that participants had been introduced to, although at various success rates. Some of these items were pumpkin, bottle ground, lima beans, snake gourds, okra, spinach, brinjal, cucumber, teasel gourd, brinjal (aubergine), chili, sword beans, ash gourds, ube (purple yams), ridge gourd, tomatoes, dioscorea yam, papaya, and flat beans. Participants were asked about using national or heritage seeds brought from their home country, but no one reported using any.

The main reported benefits were increased energy and improved overall well-being, as well as a few participants discussing weight gain, better nutrition and feeling healthier. Multiple households also mentioned the additional income, from 100 tk - 2500 tk over an unspecified period, because of selling the produce they grew. The most common reason participants liked the gardens was that they provided better access to fresh vegetables. Other benefits they mentioned were disease prevention, reduced dependency on aid agencies, reduced stress, ability to cook what they wanted, and more greenery and shade.

The inputs from the organizations were relatively similar, as the techniques being taught and implemented were similar. These consisted of rope, bags, seeds, bamboo, nest, water sprayers, and if used, fertilizer and pesticides, some of which were organic. A variety of challenges were also faced, the most common being the need for more supplies, specifically

bambusa balcooa (bamboo rods). The effects of climate change, flash flooding and monsoons, damaged a lot of the gardens and badly affected local soils. Participants also reported a lack of space, damaged roofs, pests, and domestic challenges such as children and chickens, preventing the gardens from being as successful as possible. Lastly, multiple people reported cultural challenges, when as females they were unable to climb onto the roofs to establish roof gardens or complete soil preparation due to traditional gender norms and modesty.

Permaculture as an Alternative?

While there is a small amount of literature advocating for the introduction of permaculture into refugee camps, and some training in Cox's using permaculture as an approach, there is again little systematic literature analysing the results. Permaculture focuses on 3 core and equally important principles, 'Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share, and, by analysing land, environment and natural wind and water flows, can make optimal use of the local context to grow without the use of synthetics. Permaculture goes beyond organic agriculture to create a whole system of designing gardens in balance with natural resources to give increased yields, by constructing bunds (ridges) and swales (ditches) to direct the flow of water, using organic waste to create compost, mulching land to prevent evaporation and preserve water and designing planting in ways that best protects vulnerable plants. In providing food for people, it mimics patterns found in nature to protect and enhance the broader environment. BASD – Bangladesh association for Sustainable Development has been using a permaculture informed approach to training community leaders in Cox's to start gardening groups since 2018. They claim to have been the first to introduce gardening into the camp with the support of Australian permaculture trainer Rowe Morrow, by convincing the authorities that, rather than encouraging Rohingya to stay, training in gardening would only aid their transition home as soon as they were able to leave.

BASD provides training in permaculture (72 hours spread over 15 days) and small startup grants of up to 2000 Tkr, around 15 USD. They use a cascade approach to filter learning and solidify group support. BASD also provides training to host communities and promotes seed saving meaning that after the second or third harvest the gardens need very little outlay and demonstrate consistently higher yields.

8. Discussion of Results

The camps in Cox's Bazar are one of the most densely populated in the world, and although changes in weather proves a serious challenge, the main issue for these initiatives is a lack of space. Homes lack a structure strong enough to support sufficient plant growth in vertical gardens which are best suited to small spaces. A number of organisations supported gardens in both host and camp communities and each one reported a higher yield in host community gardens than those within the camp, due to them having more space, better soils and better access to tools, seeds and water. The higher yields they show are an indication of what could be done in camps, given proper infrastructure.

Nonetheless a simple cost benefit such as this one does show that annual expenditure per household, while varying significantly between organisations, is equivalent to the cost of

between one and 5 months of cash transfers or food baskets. While none of the gardens were sufficient to replace food baskets on their own, they were certainly able to supplement these and offer additional income to families during periods of the year, enabling them to buy additional food stuffs. Additionally, organisations reporting a higher cost per household on training and garden setup, also reported a higher yield, with Action Aid for example, spending 27.6 USD per household, but with average yields of 195 kg. Concern's budget by comparison was 11.5 USD per household, but with average annual yields of only around 7-10 kg. The most basic conclusion is that money spent on gardening initiatives is money well spent.

Those that appear to be most successful in achieving results from small amounts of money were BASD, who used a cascade training model to train trainers and to provide small startup grants and Mukti, another local organisation claiming to use an organic or permaculture approach. Providing more in depth understanding of how to properly design and cultivate in small places with few resources, and giving ownership from the start with stipends rather than handouts added to yields and to continuity of the gardens. Over time these yields could be eaten and marketed, providing cash to purchase other nutritional foods. The small-scale outputs of a community organisation cannot match the large numbers of gardens supported by INGOs, but they do offer continuity of personnel, thorough local knowledge and lower overheads, which ultimately translate into good value for money.

As cuts in overseas aid and food subsidies globally are accompanied by increasing incidences of climate and conflict migration, large INGOs are having to rethink their approach. Supporting the work of small community-based organisations and sharing knowledge between them offers one way to decrease dependency and increase self-reliance.

9. Recommendations

1. Monitor, at cluster level, how organisations record and evaluate expenditure and results in order to gain a better overview of costs and benefits across the board
2. Advocate for continued support for gardens, because of the financial as well as the human benefits of these, despite cuts in aid budgets
3. Invest in training over and above providing inputs, and support growers to source and ultimately fund their own
4. Explore the benefits of a full permaculture approach, and source training in this, to deal with the challenges of growing in a changing climate
5. Work closely with small, community based organisations and encourage the development of grower cooperatives, so gardeners can share seeds, tools and knowledge and barter vegetables.

Re-Alliance is currently piloting a regenerative integrated settlement in Uganda. We have a number of books and publications dealing with food growing in small spaces, community composting and ecosan toilets