

# **Formative Research on Pashe Achhi Home Visits in the Camp**

## Background

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, BRAC has been implementing the “Pashe Achhi” telecommunication model since 2020 to ensure children feel connected and facilitate mothers’ well-being. Yet, the pressing need for psychosocial support was raised further after a massive fire incident during March 2021, which at the time, amplified trauma and stressors. Even the Rohingya people, who were not directly victims of the fire, developed a dread of it after learning of the catastrophic devastation it had caused. BRAC immediately responded to this situation and conducted 15 minutes long home visits in order to provide additional psychosocial support to the “*Pashe Achhi*” beneficiaries. A relationship had already been established between the mothers and PLs/MVs through the previous telecommunication sessions and hence, the mothers were accepting the home visit sessions and welcomed the PLs/MVs closely. Mothers perceived the home visit session as a blessing to themselves, as they could share their emotional feelings with the Play Leaders (PLs) /Mother Volunteers (MVs) while maintaining confidentiality. Children were also very happy and spontaneous after seeing the PLs at their homes, and wished to play with them. Both the mothers and children enjoyed session so much, that they requested the PLs/MVs to spend more time in their house. The PLs/MVs also reported that they were able to gain a better understanding of the families during the face-to-face session. Considering these responses, BRAC further conducted 30 minutes long home-visit sessions to the enlisted children's homes. In these extended sessions, the PLS/MVs provided psychosocial support to the mothers, as well as interacted with the children, reciting rhymes and telling stories. In addition, the facilitators engaged the children in some playful activities as they had extended time compared to the previous session. This present, formative study was designed to explore the reflections of mothers, play leaders, and mother volunteers surrounding these home-visit session.

## Objective

The objective of this formative study was to understand and evaluate the experiences of mothers, playleaders, and mother volunteers during the “*Pashe Achhi*” home-visit session.

## Methodology

In this formative study, a mostly qualitative approach was followed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) with semi-structured questionnaires. All interviews were conducted by the research and monitoring teams of PtL project on 29th April and 1st May, 2021.

### participants were selected

Types of Participants	Number of Participants
Mother	39
Play leaders	20
mother volunteers	20
Total	79

## Findings

This formative study has extracted several themes from the interviews of the mothers and the PLs/MVs about the home-visit session. The findings are divided into three major themes and further split into sub-themes under the main themes as follows-

### A. Mothers' responses to home-visit session

Mothers who received direct home visit session were interviewed to find out their thoughts regarding the session in this study. Mothers expressed their opinions and experiences regarding their wellbeing and children's responses through the sessions.

#### Positive emotional feelings toward the session

All the mothers (n=39) shared that they felt well and happy when the PLs/MVs visited their home. Mothers found the home-visit sessions enjoyable and emotionally relaxing. They were able to express their very personal sufferings and sorrows with greater confidence of confidentiality. Many of them mentioned that their family members also were happy when PLs/MVs visited their home.

One mother stated:

*"We felt happy when PL apa visited our home. Earlier she used to call us. My child also became happy by seeing her. I like it very much"*

#### Strengthen the relationship with the PLs/MVs

Mothers were overwhelmed with joy by the home-visit sessions, and mentioned that this home-visit session was an avenue to strengthen the relationship with the PLs/MVs that they had previously established via weekly phone calls.

One mother explained:

*"We shared our happiness and sorrows with her as she assured us that she would keep it secret. Now when apa visits our house, we feel free to talk with her as we know each other well. She is very good. She listened to us and taught us many things"*

#### Reminisced their childhood

All the mothers reported that the PLs/MVs played with their children during home-visit session. In terms of 0–2-years-old child cohort, the young children who could crawl and walk, also played with the PLs/MVs. A few mothers reminisced their childhood experiences by observing their play activities.

One mother shared her feelings to the playleader that:

*"...we played a lot in our childhood. Our children also play. But it would be great if we would learn the ways, you engaged our children with different play activities"*

#### Duration and frequency of the home-visit session

According to the interviews, 35.90% (n=14) mothers reported the session duration as 15-25 minutes, whereas 25.64% (n=10) and 38.46% (n=15) of mothers recalled the duration as 30 minutes and more than one hour, respectively. On the other hand, 74.36% (n=29) mothers expressed their opinion that it

would be better to increase the time with children and 20.52% (n=8) shared that it would be better to spend more time with the mother.

Regarding the frequency of the home-visit session, all the mothers were asked (n=39) to share their belief. In reply they shared that it would be better if PLs/MVs would visit once a week to conduct the sessions.

One mother expressed her opinion that:

“Children become happier when apa comes. If apa does not visit once in a week, the children will forget whatever they have learned from them”

### **Level of satisfaction on home-visit session**

Approximately, 97.43% (n=38) parents were highly satisfied after receiving home visit sessions from the PLs/MVs. One mother cited that

“We are very happy that apa comes to our home. We have learned so many things from her. She listens to us attentively. Our children also feel happy”

Only one mother shared that it would be actually better if session would be conducted during her free time.

### **B. Mothers and PLs/MVs reflection about children’ response during the home-visit session**

In this formative study, parents and PLs/MVs were interviewed and they were asked about the child responses to the home-visit session. Both the mother and the PL/MV found the session very enjoyable and helpful for the children.

### **Joyfulness and enthusiasm of children during the session**

All the participants reported that the children became happy when they saw PLs/MVs in their home. They were more joyful and enthusiastic during the home-visit session. Children were very excited, played and engaged actively with the playleaders. Some children sought more time for playing.

One mother explained her child’s feelings like

“My son gave ‘salam’ to serema, he felt very happy and waited for his serema to visit our home.”

### **Active participation of children with the PLs/MVs**

Both the mother and the PL/MV shared that, children actively engaged with the PLs/MVs during the home-visit session. In case of young children, who were approximately 9 to 10 months old, they also interacted with mother volunteers. They looked at MVs’ faces with attention and attempted to communicate. They became happy when the MVs recited rhymes to them and told stories. Some of them smiled, and pointed to mother volunteers to show their mothers. Furthermore, children around 18 to 20 months old tried to talk a little bit, they made “ o... o... ma... ma... “ sound. They also sounded like “ayce amma.....,” exclaim with joy and happiness, try to show their mothers when PLs/MVs visited their home. Older children requested to play more with the PLs/MVs.

One playleader stated that

“We used to talk with the children over phone, now when we visit their home, they become very clearly happy seeing us. They actively engage with us and sometimes demand to spend more time together”

### **C. Play Leader/Volunteers' responses about home-visit session**

In this study, PLs/MVs were interviewed to know their reflection about the home-visit session. They also expressed their opinions and experience regarding mother's wellbeing and children's development through the sessions. In addition, they mentioned a few challenges they had faced during the face-to-face session.

#### **Warm welcome and acceptance by the family**

All the PLs/MVs shared that they received a warm welcome, hospitality and respect while visiting the homes for providing the sessions in person. During the session, the PLs/MVs felt that they were going to meet with their close relatives. In some houses, even children spread a mat for them to sit and shared their toys to play with.

One Playleader stated

*".....the way they welcomed us seems like I am a member of this family and they had seen me after a long time. Sometimes even the children spread out a mat for us to sit"*

#### **Acquired a better understanding**

The PLs/MVs felt that their interaction with the mothers and children were very effective during the home-visit sessions. They could see each other in person and could observe mother's and children's facial expressions and gestures.

As one playleader cited:

*"We talked over phone earlier, sometimes there were network problems and a few other issues. Now we can meet directly, and they can speak more freely. We say one word, mothers follow our lead and continue. We can also see children's responses instantly."*

#### **Effective session conduction**

All the PLs/MVs stated that their physical presence stimulated the children and engaged them further in playful activities. The PLs/MVs recited the rhymes and told stories to the children. Apart from children, PLs/MVs also shared that during the home-visit session it became easier to demonstrate and make the mothers understand the activities that they were recommended to do with their children at home over the phone.

One playleader said:

*"We requested mothers to take her child on her lap and then recite rhymes, each 3 times. The child repeated after, smiling"*

#### **Duration and frequency of the home-visit session**

Most of the PLs/MVs found that session duration (30 minutes) was appropriate for conducting home visit sessions. Yet, some of them suggested that the mother engagement portion should be 20 minutes long, while some others recommended that the child portion could be extended to as long as 20 to 25 minutes.

Similarly, most of the PLs/MVs suggested one visit per week to maintain their robust relationships and ensure session effectiveness and sustainability, as mothers would be better able to recall sessions and activities easily.

On the other hand, two mother volunteers recommended the session twice per month to minimize the contamination and exposure risk of COVID-19. Similarly, a few playleaders recommended two home visit sessions in a month. One playleader explained,

| *“If we visit every week, parents might ask us to reopen the centers”*

### **Challenges faced by the PLs/MVs**

From the interviews, it was found that around 87% of MVs/PLs reported no challenges regarding social distancing during sessions. The rest 13% of MVs/PLs faced a few health-related challenges such as the mothers were not wearing masks, being overwhelmed some mothers wanted to hug them and a few children who desired to get up in their lap. On the other hand, only 23% PLs/MVs faced some challenges from the children’s families, as they discouraged the home visits in the month of Ramadan. A few families were also concerned about the COVID-19 contamination risk. Around 8% of MVs/PLs reported that they faced challenges from community leaders during their movement in the camp. Some PLs/MVs mentioned few more challenges like matching session time with the mother’s schedules and hot weather.

One playleader stated her experience that “Sometimes we found the mother very busy in doing household chores and told us that it would become tough for her if she spent time talking with me during daytime”

### **Level of satisfaction on home-visit session**

Most of the PLs/MVs were very happy and satisfied. According to the survey, 72.5% of them expressed a high level of satisfaction over their home visit sessions’ experiences.

One playleader mentioned that

| *“When we talked over phone sometimes, they [mothers] could not get through to us, and sometimes we missed them. Now we can see each other in face-to-face session. Children also enjoy the session more. I like this a lot.”*

However, a few PLs/MVs were concerned of being affected by COVID-19 through the home-visit session.

## **Discussion**

This formative study aims to examine the experiences of mothers, playleaders and mother volunteers about the **“Pashe Achhi”** home-visit session. To meet this objective, mostly qualitative data were collected from mothers, playleaders and mother volunteers. Findings were presented under three themes: mothers’ own reflections, mothers and PLs/MVs reflection surrounding children’s responses, & PLs/MVs own reflections.

### **Mothers’ Reflections**

Analyzing the interviews, it was evident that mothers’ experiences with these sessions were quite positive. All the mothers (n=39) shared that they felt well and happy when the PLs/MVs visited their home, as they were already receiving weekly phone calls through the **“Pashe Achhi”** telecommunication model. Moreover, during the home-visit session, mothers were able to talk more freely with the PLs/MVs, maintaining confidentiality, which gave them an emotional outlet. In addition, mothers mentioned that this home-visit session was an avenue to strengthen their relationship with the PLs/MVs which was established through

weekly phone calls. All the mothers shared that the PLs/MVs played with their children during home-visit session. Even very young children who could crawl and walk, also played with the MVs. A handful of mothers reminisced their own childhood experiences by observing their children's play activities with the playleaders, evoking a positive emotional feeling. According to existing literature produced by the American Psychological Association, people who have positive childhood memories tend to have better health outcomes in later life, including lower rates of depression and fewer chronic illnesses (American Psychological Association, 2018). Mothers also felt that they could learn more if they had received these kinds of structured play opportunity when they were younger.

As the sessions were generally enjoyable and the mothers felt emotionally connected with the PLs/MVs, all the mothers shared their opinion that it would be better if PLs/MVs visited their homes for weekly sessions. Previous studies support that regularly scheduled sessions are important to make early childhood programs effective (Siraj & Woodhead, 2009).

After the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the families supported were affected by physical distancing and faced uncertainty while quarantining at home. In these circumstances, the ***"Pashe Achhi"*** telecommunication model helped them to be more connected to others while ensuring their wellbeing through the structured psychosocial support. In addition to the phone call, this home-visit session amplified the support provided to mothers during these difficult times.

### **Children's responses**

In this formative study, parents and PLs/MVs were interviewed and asked about the child responses to the home-visit session. Both the mothers and the PLs/MVs found the session very enjoyable and helpful for the children. All the participants reported that the children became happier upon seeing the PLs/MVs in their home. As the children were receiving the sessions via phone call earlier, they were especially joyful and enthusiastic during the home-visit session. Children were very excited, playing and engaging with the PLs/MVs. The physical presence of the PLs/MVs stimulated the children and helped the children to participate more deeply in the activities. Face-to-face interaction plays a very important role in younger children's learning processes (Behrens & Kret, E., 2019; Zhang et al., 2018). The session was so enjoyable that some older children sought more time for playing, as they were used to play around two hours in the HPL. Warm relationships, rapport, and accepting dynamics had already been established, and the physical presence of the PLs/MVs stimulated the children to be engaged in the play activities. Even the very young children who were 9 - 10 months old, also interacted with mother volunteers in their own ways.

### **PLs/MVs reflection**

All the PLs/MVs shared that as the mothers accepted the PLs/MVs as close members of their lives, they received warm welcomes, hospitality and had mutual respect while visiting their homes to provide the session. During the home-visit session, the PLs/MVs felt that they were going to meet with their close relatives, as they had been regularly communicating through the weekly phone calls of the ***"Pashe Achhi"*** telecommunication. The home-visit session helped to strengthen the relationship with the mother that was formed before the home-visiting session had started, which gave them a good feeling.

The PLs/MVs also stated that through home visit, they acquired a better understanding of the mothers' emotions and feelings, as mothers found the home-visit session more confidential and were willingly to talk more candidly and freely. As the ***"Pashe Achhi"*** telecommunication model consisted of two components, "tele-counselling" and "tele-learning", the PLs/MVs used to talk with the mothers over the phone and provided psychosocial support for their emotional well-being. All the PLs/MVs received a rigorous training



in the **“Pashe Achhi”** telecommunication model, surrounding on how to start a difficult conversation over phone and provide psychosocial support to the mother. They were also instructed to listen attentively, be empathetic to the mothers and not to be judgmental. As a result, when the PLs/MVs asked the mothers to open up and share their emotions, they communicated more in a more friendly manner with the PLs/MVs during the face-to-face session, despite meeting them in person for the first time. This assisted the PLs/MVs to achieve a comprehensive understanding about the emotional feelings of the mothers. Similarly, PLs/MVs were also able to observe their children closely and engage in lively activities throughout the home-visit session. As the PLs/MVs were taught several techniques in the “Pashe Achhi” telecommunication model, such as how to communicate with children and make them understand lessons, their previous training experience enabled them to connect with the children and conduct an effective session. Apart from children, PLs/MVs also mentioned that in the home-visit session, it became easier to make the mothers understand the activities that they were suggested to do with their children.

Findings also revealed that most of the PLs/MVs did not face many challenges to conduct the session. However, a few health-related challenges were reported by some PLs/MVs, which included difficulty in maintaining social distance and mothers not wearing masks despite the COVID-19 crisis. There were some other limitations and challenges noted. For instance, the PLs/MVs sometimes faced challenges to match their schedules with the mothers for coordinating the sessions for in home visits. PLs/MVs shared that some mothers stated that their children fall asleep when the PLs/MVs visited the homes. In addition, in the month of Ramadan, a few mothers were observed reciting Quran during the home visit and they declined to talk at that time. The PLs/MVs also mentioned that a few mothers found it difficult to talk to PLs/MVs, as they had to engage in household chores during daytime. Those mothers also added that they could talk and complete some household activities simultaneously over the phone call through the **“Pashe Achhi”** telecommunication model.

During the home-visit session, due to high temperatures, the PLs/MVs found it difficult to walk from door-to-door. They became thirsty and could not drink water, as they were fasting during the month of Ramadan. They also shared that due to the massive fire in March 2021 in the Rohingya camp, a lot of shelters were destroyed and damaged. As a result, many people are currently living in temporary sheds. Conducting the sessions in these sheds, with the ongoing heat wave, became fatiguing for the PLs/MVs.

From this study, it was evident that almost all the activities had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the mother and child’s wellbeing. Everybody accepted with open arms the home-visit sessions as they were already well-connected through the **“Pashe Achhi”** telecommunication model. This study revealed that a combination of weekly phone calls and home-visit sessions might have a greater impact on child development, while facilitating mothers’ emotional well-being during any circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Recommendations

Based on the present study findings, the following recommendations may help meet the objectives more robustly:

- Flexibility in session length may be considered. For the 2–6-year age group, the sessions could be extended to 30 to 40 minutes long as children sought more time. For the 0-2 age group, session length could be 25 to 30 minutes, with 5 to 10 minutes allocated to children.
- At least two home visit sessions per month could be delivered alongside the telecommunication sessions, with each telecommunication session followed by an in person visit session.



- Before scheduling home visits, PLs/MVs should consult with mothers to avoid time mismatching or scheduling challenges, to ensure they are both available for sessions.
- Covid-19 prevention practices should be more strictly followed, such as wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, and sanitizing hands before entering a home during home visits.
- Low-cost play materials could be distributed to children, especially the children in fire incident affected areas, if feasible for the program.

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