

Like 39

Share

Share:

Tweet



BOND STREET THEATRE

peacebuilding, empowerment & healing through theatre



Joy and sorrow are reflected in the faces of the Rohingya women in our audience above. Their smiles contrast recent images of Rohingya Muslims fleeing their native country of Myanmar. As these images capture hearts and minds, the global flight of the Rohingya increases. But s uppression has been their reality for decades.

The plight of the Rohingya was one of the issues that brought us to Myanmar eight years ago, and their mass exodus from the country is one of the key factors that led to **Bond Street's most recent project in Malaysia.**

More than **150,000 refugees and asylum seekers** are registered with the UN Refugee Agency in Malaysia, and hundreds more arrive daily. Malaysia is not a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, which leaves the country's

refugee population extremely vulnerable, subject to exploitation, and without legal protections.

In addition to those fleeing conflict in Myanmar, other refugees in Malaysia come from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, Iran, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Iraq and Syria, creating a plethora of languages, customs and cultures to add to the trauma of displacement for those struggling to start a new life .



The new Rohingya Women's Theatre company presents a scene they created directly from their experiences: being stopped by police, a constant fear for refugees.

Using theatre as an entertaining and engaging way to get information to refugees without relying on language -- this was our challenge! Along with our skillful partners, [Masakini Theatre](#), we created physical performances that illustrated the myriad issues facing refugees and their options for solutions.

We worked directly with [Asylum Access Malaysia](#), a legal aid organization that has helped hundreds of refugees successfully navigate the complex legal processes that allow refugees to live safely and move freely in Malaysia. However, their issue was getting information to refugees with so many languages and educational levels.

"We found that PowerPoint presentations were a little dry, not holding people's attention," said Nazim Bashir, Outreach Coordinator for Asylum Access Malaysia.

Theatre to the rescue! We enacted scenes illustrating options for going to school, getting health care, finding work, what to do in cases of employment abuse, what to do if detained by the police, and more. This information is crucial, and most important... .

Everyone got it! As we see from the smiles and raised hands of the women in the photo above!



A workshop with the Somali Community Coalition in Kuala Lumpur .

In addition, we enjoyed working with the **Somali Community Coalition**, an energetic group that love theatre and want to learn more . Happy to oblige. We also presented our informative show for refugees from Afghanistan and Iran.

As Rohingya poured into the country, they became the focus our attention. Denied citizenship or access to education for decades in Myanmar, most Rohingya cannot read or write, so posters and powerpoints are... pointless.

In cooperation with the Rohingya Women's Development Network, we created the **Rohingya Women's Theatre** . The five members of the new ensemble surprised us with their talent. Considering that each was married by age 15 and had no experience with theatre, they blossomed before our eyes, and their scenes were heart-rending.

Read more about them on the [Bond Street Blog](#) plus other stories and photos about our work with refugees over the years.

Perhaps the best part is that both the Somali and Rohingya refugee groups will continue to train weekly with the professional actors of Masakini Theatre under the guidance of Artistic Director Sabera Shaik.

We are so grateful to **Rational Games** for supporting this project... and to our dedicated friends for making this and our other projects possible.

[Join us! Please renew your donation today!](#)

Together, we can continue to work to create a more tolerant, peaceful world.

With hope,

Joanna Sherman
Artistic Director

Bond Street Theatre initiates theatre-based projects for education, conflict resolution and healing in areas of conflict and poverty globally.



[Click here to support our work around the world!](#)

Bond Street Theatre is a not-for-profit organization and an NGO in association with the United Nations. All donations are tax-deductible as allowable by law.

info@bondst.org

212-254-4614

www.bondst.org



Stay connected with BST!

Confirm that you like this.

Click the "Like" button.