

April 2020



A young Rohingya refugee girl in a UNICEF temporary learning centre funded by UKAid in Cox's Bazar © Russell Watkins / DFID



'I don't have any aspiration because I couldn't study': Exploring the educational barriers facing adolescents in Cox's Bazar

Authors: Silvia Guglielmi, Nicola Jones, Jennifer Muz, Sarah Baird, Khadija Mitu and Muhammad Ala Uddin¹

Overview

The right to education is stipulated in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (UNHCR, 2018) setting out a vision for all stakeholders to work in unison to expand national educational systems and accommodate refugee and host community children and adolescents alike. This vision is further articulated in Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion (UNHCR, 2019) and aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 calling for 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations, 2015).

Education for adolescents in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, however, is a serious concern. Approximately half of the Rohingya children living in the area had not participated in any form of learning prior to displacement from Myanmar (Education Cannot Wait, 2018) and the recent influx has placed pressure on the fragile structures serving host community adolescents. Although the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child mandates the sacrosanct right to education (UN General Assembly, 1989), Rohingya refugees have been denied formal education. Children aged 4–14 receive informal learning via a tailor-made Learning Competency Framework curriculum developed by UNICEF and partners, delivered in more than 2,000 learning centres across the refugee camps (UNICEF, 2020b).² Many adolescents are not able to access learning, however, and the 2020 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya crisis warns that 'an alarming 83 percent of the [Rohingya] adolescents and youth aged 15-24 years old don't have access to any educational or skills development activities' (ISCG et al., 2020: 70).

¹ Suggested citation: Guglielmi, S., Jones, N., Muz, J., Baird, S., Mitu, K. and Ala Uddin, M. (2020) "'I don't have any aspiration because I couldn't study': exploring the educational barriers facing adolescents in Cox's Bazar.' Policy Brief. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence.

² Home-based learning, religious schools and cross-sector shared learning facilities (i.e. girl-friendly spaces, child-friendly spaces, adolescents clubs) provide additional informal learning opportunities in the camps.

In Ukhia and Teknaf host communities, secondary and higher secondary school enrollment rates covering ages 12–18 are lower than national averages, with financial constraints constituting the most pronounced obstacles to both enrolling and completing secondary education (ISCG, et al., 2019; World Bank, 2019). Moreover, the Rohingya influx has impacted the quality of education in host communities, due to the loss of teachers to higher remunerative opportunities in camps (ISCG, et al., 2020). As the crisis protracts, bridging these gaps will require long-term creative thinking.

Following negotiations to allow the Rohingya to start to access formal education, the second quarter of 2020 will see the introduction of the Myanmar curriculum on a pilot basis. Education partners will implement the curriculum, beginning with middle school grades 6–9, with the intent to reintegrate children and youth into Myanmar society once repatriation becomes possible (ISCG et al., 2020). Acknowledging this welcome change, this brief synthesises findings on education and learning among Rohingya and host community adolescents from baseline research conducted by the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme prior to this policy shift. Our aim is to highlight the educational deprivations that many adolescents face, with a view to being able to assess the impact of the changes over time on adolescents' education and broader well-being.

Methodology and conceptual framing

This brief draws on mixed-methods data collected in 2019 as part of the GAGE longitudinal research programme, which explores what works to support the development of adolescents' (10–19 years) capabilities (GAGE consortium,

2019). In Bangladesh, GAGE partnered with researchers from Yale University and the World Bank to implement the Cox's Bazar Panel Survey (CBPS)³ with 2,280 adolescent girls and boys and their caregivers (Cox's Bazar Panel Survey, 2019). The quantitative survey was complemented by in-depth qualitative research across three camps⁴ and two host communities in the Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas (sub-districts) with a sub-sample of 149 Rohingya and Bangladeshi adolescents, their families and communities, using interactive tools with individuals and groups. Our sample included two cohorts – younger adolescents (10–12 years) and older adolescents (15–18 years). In line with the 2030 Agenda's commitment to 'leave no one behind', we also included adolescents with disabilities, and adolescent girls and boys who married as children (see Table 1). We also carried out key informant interviews with service providers and programme and policy actors.

Our analysis followed the GAGE conceptual framework (see Figure 1), (GAGE consortium, 2019), which focuses on adolescents' multidimensional capabilities and recognises that they face different constraints at different stages of the life course. This brief focuses on the education and learning capability domain, encompassing access to and quality of education, adolescent and parental aspirations, and teacher violence.

The framework recognises that adolescents' capability outcomes are highly dependent on contextual realities at household, community, state and global levels, which also determine the policies and programmes that can be employed to improve adolescents' outcomes. To nurture transformative change, change strategies must invest in integrated intervention approaches to support adolescent girls and boys, their families and communities, while also working for system-level change.

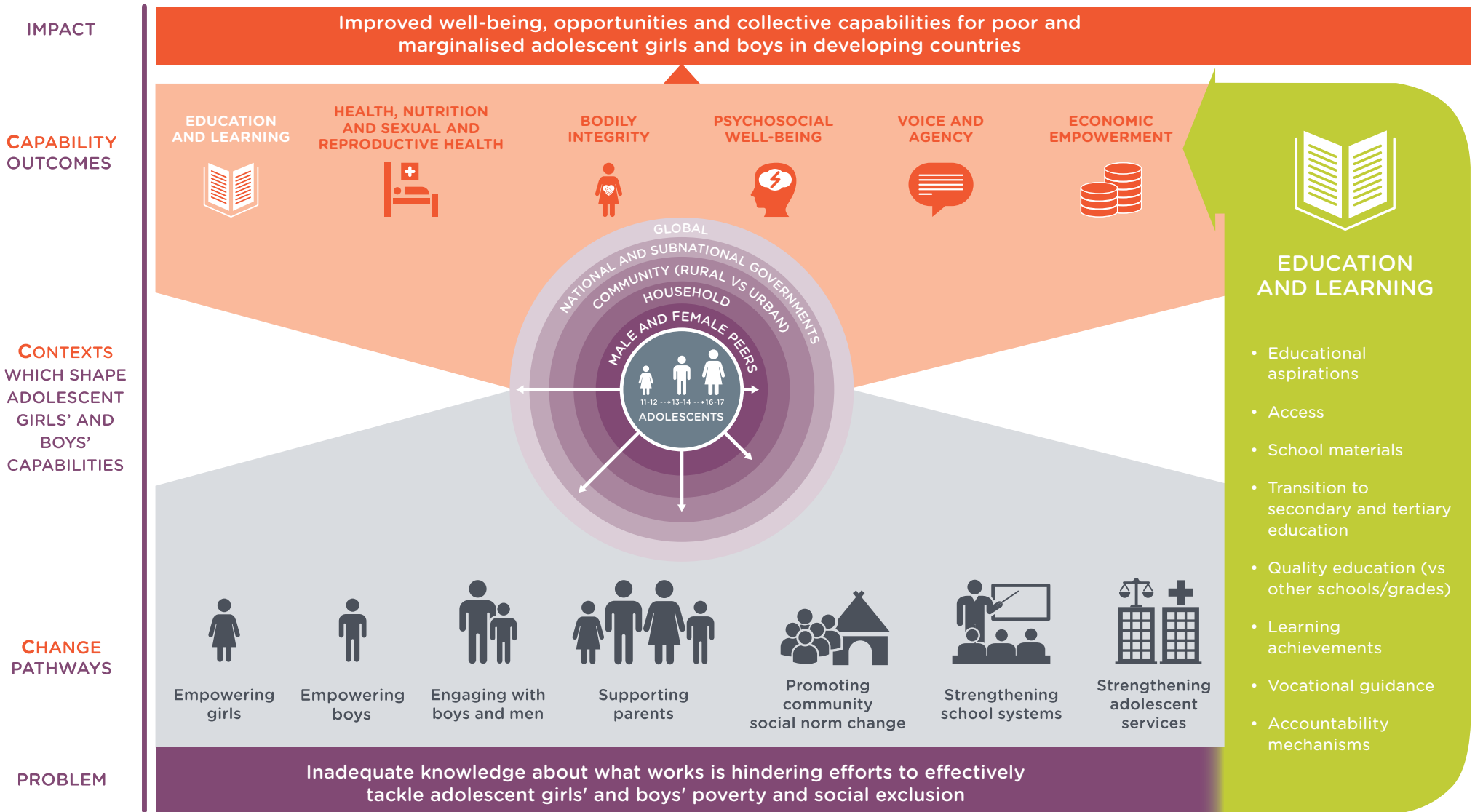
Table 1: Mixed-methods research sample

	Quantitative fieldwork		Qualitative fieldwork	
	Fieldwork sites	No. of respondents	Fieldwork	No. of respondents
Refugee camps	32	1,209	3	112
Host communities in Teknaf and Ukhia	57	1,071	2	37
Total	89	2,280	5	149

³ The Cox's Bazar Panel Survey (CBPS) is a partnership between the Yale Macmillan Center Program on Refugees, Forced Displacement, and Humanitarian Responses (Yale Macmillan PRFDHR), the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) programme, and the Poverty and Equity Global Practice (GPVDR) of the World Bank. Within the partnership, the Yale-Macmillan team has a special interest in migration and employment history, the World Bank team has a special interest in consumption patterns and food security, and the GAGE team has a special interest in issues affecting adolescents.

⁴ We have anonymised the camp names to protect the privacy of study participants, and refer to them here as Camps A, B and C.

Figure 1: GAGE '3 Cs' conceptual framework



Source: GAGE Consortium, 2019

Scope and scale of the challenge: key findings

Access to education

In Cox's Bazar, 32 partners are working in the education sector of the humanitarian response, but despite significant progress in advancing educational access since 2017,⁵ many adolescents do not have the opportunity to learn (ISCG, et al., 2020). Approximately 63% of 12–17-year-olds are enrolled in formal education in the Ukhia and Teknaf host communities (ISCG, 2019a) while among 15–18-year-olds, only 15% of boys and 2% of girls access learning in informal education centres in the camps (ISCG, 2019b). Recent multi-sectoral needs assessments found that schooling costs, and the opportunity costs associated with schooling, are the two most common barriers to education in host communities. Among Rohingya in the refugee camps, 'marriage' and 'other cultural reasons' were most frequently cited in explaining why adolescents do not attend informal education centres (ISCG, 2019a; 2019b).

In our sample, 48% of adolescents are currently enrolled in formal school, with significant variations in location, gender and age. Our data highlights the stark differences in the educational services available to Bangladeshi and Rohingya adolescents: Bangladeshi adolescents generally have access to formal learning, while Rohingya adolescents do not.

In host communities, 73% of adolescents in our sample are enrolled in school. Girls are 23% more likely to be enrolled than boys (80% and 66% respectively) and older adolescents are 35% less likely to be enrolled than younger adolescents (61% and 82% respectively). Bangladeshi girls in our sample have, on average, completed an additional year of schooling than boys: 7.4 years vs. 6.4 years. Gender and age disparities in formal educational access are probably due to gendered norms, which impact girls and boys differently as they transition through adolescence. Our qualitative research found that in host communities, education is often undervalued given the productive (for boys) and domestic (for girls) work roles that adolescents are often expected to fulfil. Adolescent boys are overwhelmingly seen as an earning source within the family since they can collect fuel, work as shop assistants, pull rickshaws and help in fisheries work; girls, however, face the prospect of early marriage and are meant to manage the household. As highlighted by a staff member from an international non-governmental organisation (NGO), '*The community*' do not recognise adolescents as children. In terms of boys they engage them in child labour and in terms of girls they face early

marriage. The community thinks they are grown up now, they do not have any consciousness about adolescence. Especially, when girls face her first menstrual period, her going to school and outside for any work just stops and parents search for grooms for them. And in the case of boys, they start day labour as shopkeepers or other work.' This is in keeping with estimates from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2018), which reports that Cox's Bazar has long had high levels of child labour, and that boys are more significantly impacted than girls.

Our qualitative data also finds that costs related to education play a significant role in dropout rates among host communities. Contrary to the provision of free and compulsory primary education, pupils are required to pay tuition fees for secondary school and although the Government of Bangladesh has enacted measures to accelerate secondary school entry by capping fee increases and providing stipends to the very vulnerable – girls in particular (Mahmoud, 2003; Trines, 2019), measures do not go far enough for some households. A man in a focus group discussion in Teknaf explained, '*We can't bear the expenses. We have to give a child 3,000 taka monthly for their transport. We have to pay teacher fees. So many expenses. Fees are also increasing day by day when the child is going upper classes.*' Our survey findings indicate that in host communities, only 21% of students enrolled in school receive benefits towards the costs of tuition or materials, and younger adolescents were more likely to be recipients of such benefits than older adolescents (25% and 14% respectively).

Education provision for Rohingya adolescents in camps is largely informal. Our data indicate that this comprises 70% NGO-run programmes, 14% Hafezi learning (focused almost exclusively on memorising the Qur'an), 12% private tutoring, and the remaining 4% home schooling or other forms of informal education including maktab/madrassa informal education where students learn the Qur'an, some Arabic and other Islamic education. Just under half of Rohingya adolescents in our sample currently attend informal

► [The community] do not recognise adolescents as children. In terms of boys they engage them in child labour and in terms of girls they face early marriage.

(A staff member from an international NGO)

⁵ UNICEF reports that 'access of Rohingya refugee children in education increased from 60 per cent of boys and 57 per cent of girls aged 6 to 14 in 2018 to 76 per cent of boys and 70 per cent of girls per cent in 2019' (UNICEF, 2020: 1).

schooling (49%), with boys 53% more likely to attend than girls (58% compared to 38%). Younger adolescents are more than three times as likely to attend informal education than their older counterparts (68% and 15% respectively). The gender disparity is particularly large for older adolescents, where 28% of boys are enrolled in informal education, compared to only 2% of girls. Upon reaching puberty, girls have to stay indoors to maintain the Rohingya practice of *pardah*.⁶ Although the exact prevalence of child marriage in the camps is unknown, our data suggest that the prospect of marriage impacts girls' education options as soon as they reach puberty (see box). The practice of *pardah* emerged strongly during many of our qualitative interviews with girls and boys, and key informants:

'Girls can't study after growing up in our community.'
(15-year-old girl, Camp B)

'Why would a girl of such big age [15] go to school? People would insult them. Boys can go.' (12-year-old girl, Camp B)

'After first menstrual flow a girl is captive in home ... They don't have permission to come to school or [community] centre. In a word, girls stay at home as prisoners.' (48-year-old female NGO worker, Camp A)

Girls can't study after growing up in our community.

(A 15-year-old girl, Camp B)

After first menstrual flow a girl is captive in home... They don't have permission to come to school or [community] centre. In a word, girls stay at home as prisoners.

(A 48-year-old female NGO worker, Camp A)

In host communities, informal learning is less predominant than in camps, with 9% of our sample enrolled in informal education (46% of informal learning is private tutoring and 43% Hafezi learning).

Quality of learning

In the camps, although the learning centres provide informal education to children and adolescents aged 4–14 (UNICEF, 2020b), respondents perceive them as catering to young children only. Our qualitative data highlights that Rohingya parents perceive learning centres as offering recreational opportunities and snacks for children and very young adolescents, while quality learning takes place either through private tutors or in Hafezi centres. However, many families cannot afford quality learning for their children from private tutoring or religious teaching, as expressed during a women's focus group in Camp C: *'[Our children] are going*

Box 1: Educational challenges facing married adolescent girls

In both our camp and host community sample, marital status negatively impacts all educational outcomes. In host communities, married older girls are significantly less likely to be enrolled in school compared to unmarried older girls (9% and 68% respectively), and we found no married girls enrolled in informal education, compared to 6% of older unmarried girls. Married girls also have lower educational aspirations overall, largely due to social norms that preclude girls mixing with the opposite sex. As highlighted by a 15-year-old married girl from Teknaf, *'I feel not good [for having stopped going to school]. [But my father] told me, "You are grown up now." I said, "I want to go." But he told me it's a sin. I wanted to study up to class five.'*

In camps, mobility restrictions faced by all older adolescent girls mean that marital status does not sever educational prospects as much as age. Nearly no married girls were enrolled in informal schooling, while just 3% of unmarried older girls were. Older unmarried girls are 4 times more likely to aspire to university education than married girls, though aspirations for secondary school completion are similar. The story of a 16-year-old married girl in Camp A underscores the many risks facing adolescent Rohingya girls:

'I came to Bangladesh in 2012 [after class 4], I was 9 years old then ... I got admitted into school [but I was] admitted into class 1. Once a teacher beat me up and that's why I didn't continue to go to school anymore. Actually it's not beating, he used to laugh at me throwing the chalks aiming at my head ... Then my father said, "Our girl is grown up now. She doesn't need to go to school" and I stopped going. I wished to study [more] but my parents didn't allow me to go out ... Being confined at home means being grown up. We are confined at home wearing a veil and then we are to be married off. I was married off very early at the age of 14. But according to the law, the age of marriage for girls is 18, and for boys it's 21. It was my parents' desire. That's why they married me off [and I had a child after] 7 months.'

⁶ *Purdah* dictates that upon reaching puberty, girls are required to stay within the walls of their family home until they marry and, frequently, staying indoors remains a feature of their married life as well (Sang, 2018; Tay et al., 2018; Wake et al., 2019).

▶ There is no book for them [at the learning centre] and they just give the kids biscuits. They just play there and make some paper flowers, that's it. No study at all.

(17-year-old boy from Camp B)

to the learning centre. But they are not learning anything there. It is not any kind of education. Still we have to send our children there as we ... can't afford any education, snacks and clothes for them. But if we want to educate them, we have to give money to the madrasa of the village.' For older adolescents, the learning centres offer neither social nor learning opportunities, as a 17-year-old boy from Camp B reported, 'I have admitted my little brothers, they have no change in their study. After two years they have no change. There is no book for them and they just give the kids biscuits. They just play there and make some paper flowers, that's it. No study at all.' This possibly reflects the limited training undertaken by staff in the learning centres

or simply lack of resources; UNICEF (2020a) notes that its staff received a five-day training course on the Learning Competency Framework and approach.

In camps, approximately 2.4% of the adolescents in our sample benefited from skills building and vocational training programmes offered in multi-purpose centres. Nearly all beneficiaries of such programmes were older girls, and our qualitative data shows that sewing and tailoring are the most common types of training programme provided to girls. Adolescent boys appear frustrated at the missed opportunity to participate in skills building programmes, and feel de-skilled by time spent idle in the camps. As an 18-year-old young man from Camp B explained, '[NGOs] want to give more jobs to the girls among the refugees ... [There is no vocational training for older boys in the camp] 12-year-old boys can go in school, in child-friendly space, [and work] in the block as a volunteer ... I worry about how I shall earn

▶ If students can't complete their homework, [teachers] teach and explain again.

(A 16-year-old boy in Ukhia)



money... [I had operated a computer] in Myanmar. But I have forgotten this due to not practising after coming here.'

By contrast, our qualitative data highlights that many Bangladeshi adolescents enrolled in schools in Teknaf and Ukhia are satisfied with the quality of teaching received. In Ukhia, a 14-year-old boy reported that teachers '... *teach us very well and teach points on the board. Madams explain the article and teach us how to answer in the exam.*' A 16-year-old boy explained, '*If students can't complete their homework, [teachers] teach and explain again.*' Host community parents also highlighted that the present educational offer has improved since they were students, and many now believe that those who complete education have more chance of finding employment. Moreover, parents expressed that teachers care that their students are learning, and the government is making efforts to boost admissions: '*Some people come to see if there is any child who is not attending school. They come here and collect data about them*', explained one participant in a women's focus group in Ukhia. That said, our qualitative data matches other literature (ISOG, et al., 2019 and 2020) reporting the loss of qualified teachers who are leaving their jobs to work with humanitarian organizations in the camps. Addressing the extent of teaching shortages in host communities as a result of the influx, is a concern GAGE will be further investigating in forthcoming research.

Educational aspirations

Overall, the adolescents in our sample displayed high educational aspirations. On average, adolescents aspired to study until completing upper secondary school (grade 12). While 45% of adolescents aspire to at least some university education, there are significant differences in aspirations by location, age and gender. Educational aspirations among Rohingya adolescent are 2 grades lower than those of their Bangladeshi counterparts (grade 10 compared to grade 12). Likewise, in camps, boys aspire to complete 2 additional grades than girls on average (grade 11 vs grade 9) and young adolescents aspire to attain one

► I have to study, to talk beautifully like her (the NGO survey worker). I have to treat others like the way she treated me. We have to show sympathy while we are talking to others and we have to study.

(A 15-year-old girl, Camp C)

► When the girls become adolescents, they needn't study. Who will do the domestic work, if she studies? I knew that if the girls could write their name then it would be enough education for them.

(A 50-year-old father)

additional grade than older adolescents (grade 10 vs grade 11). Among Rohingya girl respondents, bettering oneself is correlated to increased years of study, as a 15-year-old in Camp C explained: '*I have to study, to talk beautifully like her (the NGO survey worker). I have to treat others like the way she treated me. We have to show sympathy while we are talking to others and we have to study.*' By contrast, boys primarily mentioned aspirations in line with finding future employment, including aspirations to become teachers or Islamic theologians.

The reality for Rohingya adolescents, however, is that most have completed school up to grade 3 only (on average), and the lack of formal education in the camps means the gap between their actual attainment and their aspirations is widening. Although survey data reveals high aspirations, our qualitative data shows that many adolescents have become resigned to their circumstances – be it displacement, poverty, or social norms limiting their access to education. As a 16-year-old girl from Camp C explained, '*We didn't have any chance to go to school there [in host communities]. We don't go out. What will I do? I say my prayer, read Qur'an, eat rice and serve food to others.*' The lack of educational options has profound repercussions for some older Rohingya adolescents, who lament the resulting loss of role models, as a 15-year-old boy from Camp A reported, '*I don't have any aspiration because I couldn't study. If I studied, I would want to be like someone. But I didn't study. Whom do I want to be like?*'

In host communities, there are minimal differences in adolescents' aspirations by gender and age. Our qualitative data highlights that host community adolescents want to study to find gainful and meaningful employment, as highlighted by a 15-year-old disabled girl in Teknaf: '*Yes, I do [wish to study]. Till Secondary School Certification. I want to get a job. I want to be a doctor and treat people.*' As in the camps, though, host community adolescents' high aspirations are not met by their lived realities: most have attended up to grade 6, on average. Though socio-cultural reasons persist, financial constraints are the most commonly mentioned obstacles to fulfilling aspirations in Teknaf and Ukhia. Wider Cox's Bazar Panel Survey data has

revealed that, 'Among those who drop out, 43% of boys and 44% of girls report the lack of financial resources as the main reason for dropping out of school' (World Bank, 2019).

Parental support for education

While governmental policy in Bangladesh and Myanmar has blocked formal provisioning (up to 2020), educational attainment in Myanmar's Rakhine state (from which the Rohingya living in Cox's Bazar arrived) has long been extremely low, with nearly half of children having never attended school and those that do completing only three or four years (Education Cannot Wait, 2018). UNICEF reports that over 90% of pupils in learning centres are placed in competency levels 1 or 2, equivalent to pre-primary level up to grade 2 in a formal school system (UNICEF, 2020b). As girls are typically confined to home once they reach puberty, adolescent girls have historically had even less access to education than boys (Gordon et al., 2018). Our qualitative data suggests that parents are more interested in religious education providers for their children, rather than secular schooling. As a 48-year-old female Camp A manager explained, '[Overall, the Rohingya have] no intention of studying. We have to force them to study. When they are in Myanmar they didn't get any chance of education so they have little intention to study. Those who are a little educated want different education [for their children] and

▶ I don't see with my eyes. Moreover, I don't study. If I could see or I could study, I would have everything.

(A 13-year-old girl in Ukhaia)

have to spend money on it. But overall, their eagerness for education is quite poor.' This is corroborated by a 56-year-old father from Camp C who stated, 'I admitted them to the school. None of them can say I didn't admit them to the school. I have four daughters and four sons and by the grace of Allah, all of my children have studied... They didn't study any further ... when they were done learning the Qur'an, I said it's enough. No need of any more worldly education.'

There are also gender disparities in how Rohingya parents perceive their children as they reach adolescence. Overwhelmingly, boys are required to contribute to household finances while girls are relegated to the domestic sphere. As a 50-year-old father explained, 'When the girls become adolescents, they needn't study. Who will do the domestic work, if she studies? I knew that if the girls could write their name then it would be enough education for them.'

By contrast, in host communities, our qualitative data shows that when circumstances permit, parents want their



Inside a Bangladesh refugee camp a classroom of Rohingya children sing at a UNICEF learning centre, funded by UK aid © Anna Dubuis / DFID

Box 2: Parental support for education for adolescents with disabilities

The 2020 Joint Response Plan estimates that children with disabilities are between 10% and 40% less likely to attend learning facilities than children without disabilities (ISCG et al., 2020). Our qualitative data suggests that disabled adolescents face greater challenges in accessing and progressing through education.

Accessibility in camps and host communities appears to be an insurmountable hurdle for some adolescents who are unable to travel to school due to their physical and other impairments. A recent vulnerability assessment (ACAPS, 2019) found that Rohingya individuals with physical and visual impairments face increased barriers in accessing services in the camps, primarily due to the hilly and uneven terrain. Many disabled adolescents are thus left behind – unable to access educational facilities and their family unable to afford home tutoring. As an 18-year-old boy in Camp B explained, *'[Tutors] don't come to my home. Who will come to my house to teach me? I don't have money. So, how can anyone teach me?'* We did, however, find some exceptions among Rohingya adolescents with disabilities who lived close to education centres, or who, with the help of family, were able to access madrasas and learning centres, as highlighted by the mother of a 10-year-old girl with a hearing disability in Camp B, *'She goes to Madrasa very early in the morning. After coming from madrasa she goes to school. The school is nearby and her brothers, relatives and the neighbors also go there. She comes and goes with them.'*

In host communities, distance to schools poses a barrier for students with disabilities as well as the limited facilities of some schools. Moreover, specialist attention and care for students with disabilities appears to vary widely between schools and teachers. Some teachers differentiate their classroom teaching and specifically cater to those with special needs by choosing seating plans accordingly, for example. In other schools, the needs of adolescents with disabilities appear invisible. As a 15-year-old girl from Ukhia explained, *'[They teach properly but] we have to sit on the floor, we have to sit spreading sacks. [Students] play running, jumping, play with stones ... [but] I don't play. I just watch them playing.'*

Across locations, adolescents with disabilities in school mentioned the joy in winning prizes or scoring well on an assignment, as recalled by a 17-year old boy in Camp C, *'when I was in school I was given a prize. That time my parents were so happy.'* Those who do not go to school lamented the loss of such an important aspect of their personal growth, as a 13-year-old girl in Ukhia said, *'I don't see with my eyes. Moreover, I don't study. If I could see or I could study, I would have everything.'*

For adolescents with disabilities, parental aspirations for education are mixed. Some parents try to provide home-based learning for their children to help them cope with not attending school. Other parents appear to have given up hope for their children, even when learning opportunities are presented to them. The mother of a 17-year-old girl with a hearing disability explained: *'If I send her at the place where girls are trained up in tailoring work, she could become intelligent. People also advise me to send her [there] ... They also tell that her being dumb will not make any obstacle there and she can do this. [But] No. She doesn't go anywhere. We don't let her to go out. That's why she has no idea about these.'*

children to study as a route to employment. In Teknaf, parents complained about the lack of employment options outside fishery work, and the dangerous yet potentially lucrative drug business facilitated by living near the border with Myanmar. Parents want additional employment options for their children, as one participant in a focus group discussion for men commented: *'they are studying so a garment or any factory can be established'*.

In the case of adolescents with disabilities, our findings paint a mixed picture. Some families provide high levels of support to enable to their children to attend educational centres, while others have adopted a more fatalistic attitude (see Box 2).

Teacher violence

Our survey data finds that 85% of adolescents enrolled in either formal or informal education programmes have been physically punished by a teacher. Our qualitative and quantitative data shows that violence at school is widespread both among our host community sample (93%) and Rohingya adolescents (64%) attending religious

or private tutoring in camps. However, our data finds that there is little or no violence in the learning centres in camps, where the perception is that pupils may do as they please, and come and go as they wish. In private or religious education, violence is commonplace and takes the form of slaps and beatings, which teachers mete out to pupils for failing to study properly, not completing homework, or causing mischief. A 15-year-old boy from Camp A explained, *'If [students] study well, they don't batter them, otherwise they batter. They batter with a stick ... boys are*

 **If [students] study well, they don't batter them, otherwise they batter. They batter with a stick... boys are battered more [than girls].**

(A 15-year-old boy, Camp A)



Young adolescent boy from the Rohingya community in Bangladesh © Anna Dubuis / DFID

battered more [than girls]. A 12-year-old girl in Camp B recalled being beaten by the madrasa *Hujur* (teacher) when failing to learn lessons or skipping class. She recalled, ‘*One of them used to hit so hard that often it bled.*’

Corporal punishment was formally banned in Bangladesh in 2011 following a Supreme Court ruling stating that the practice violated Constitutional protection against cruel punishment and degrading treatment (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020). This decision came following petitions and reports exposing the endemic nature of corporal punishment in schools. Alarming, a 2008 UNICEF Bangladesh report covering 9–18-year-olds across nearly 4,000 households found that ‘91% of children in school experience physical punishment. Poorer children were more likely to experience it, with greater frequency and severity, than richer students. Twenty-three per cent of students said they faced corporal punishment every day and 7% reported injuries and bleeding as a result’ (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020).

Notwithstanding the formal ban on corporal punishment, our host community data shows that teacher violence

📌 Teachers love us, but if we don’t complete our lesson then they beat us.

(A 11-year-old boy, Teknaf)

continues to be commonplace and normalised. Some adults view teacher violence as necessary for successful learning, as a 43-year-old female teacher in Ukhia explained: ‘*When the government banned beating in schools, the students of the village don’t study at all.*’ Our qualitative data highlights that both girls and boys experience teacher violence, but older boys appear much more likely to. Teachers beat their pupils for a multitude of reasons: ‘*When anyone disobeys*’ stated a 12-year-girl from Ukhia; ‘*If we make irrelevant fun, or if we don’t learn the lesson*’ explained a 10-year-old girl from Teknaf; or, as summed up by an 11-year-old boy from Teknaf: ‘*Teachers love us, but if we don’t complete our lesson then they beat us.*’

Policy and programming implications

Our baseline research findings highlight the need for policy and programming that enhance learning opportunities for Rohingya adolescents in camps and Bangladeshi adolescents in host communities. Priority actions for consideration include the following:

1 Expand authorised informal learning curricula frameworks for Rohingya adolescents.

As education sector partners negotiate with the Government of Bangladesh over expanding the Learning Competency Framework for levels 3, 4 and 5 (ISCG et al., 2020), the current grouping of students by competency level risks leaving behind adolescents who disengage from learning centres when classes are shared with young children. Alternative benchmarks and pathways that are based on age-appropriateness and competencies need to be prioritised for the current cohort of adolescents to ensure that adolescents are gaining literacy, numeracy and other foundational skills. If not, they risk becoming a lost generation without any educational accreditation or learning progression, making them highly vulnerable to protection threats.

2 Increase context-tailored and gender-sensitive access to vocational and technical skills development programmes

aimed at securing employment in context-appropriate value chains. For Rohingya adolescents, skills programmes should facilitate their reintegration in Myanmar when repatriation becomes possible and in line with the 2020 Joint Response Plan strategic priority to support sustainable solutions in Myanmar (ibid.). In the interim, skills development should also give adolescents the opportunity to utilise acquired skill sets in camp life; an analysis of skills-to-work transitions needs to be conducted in the design phase of such programmes. There should be special attention to the provision of mobile vocational learning and chaperones to escort girls to training services, so that interventions reach adolescent girls facing mobility restrictions. For Bangladeshi adolescents, the design

of programmes in host communities should align with labour market opportunities and job-related skills development training and support.

3 Address the major obstacles to educational enrolment for Rohingya and Bangladeshi adolescents.

For Rohingya adolescents, a package of interventions around gendered social norms, targeting families, religious and community leaders, should promote the importance of girls' education – including informal education and vocational training – and highlight the negative consequences of early marriage. To support secondary education for host community adolescents, social protection packages need to be amplified to mitigate tuition, transport and opportunity costs associated with boys' and girls' secondary school enrolment. Learning related to labelled cash transfer programmes for education (e.g. UNICEF Jordan's Hajati programme targeting refugees and vulnerable host community adolescents, and the World Bank/Government of Turkey's conditional cash transfer for education) may be helpful to social protection actors as they develop such initiatives.

4 Improve service delivery by investing in robust teacher training to foster inclusive learning environments.

In camps, capacity-building efforts aimed at training Rohingya instructors – both pre-service training and in-service training – need to be upgraded to enhance rigorous learning progression within informal education curricula and the forthcoming pilot roll-out of the Myanmar curriculum in 2020. All refugee educators should make particular efforts to expand learning opportunities for adolescent girls, through outreach to parents and community leaders. In host communities, teachers need support to adopt non-violent disciplinary approaches to put an end to corporal punishment in schools. Differentiated learning methods to fuel inclusive classroom learning for students with disabilities need to be streamlined across educational institutions.

References

- ACAPS (2019) *Vulnerabilities in the Rohingya refugee camps*. ACAPS thematic report (www.acaps.org/country/bangladesh/special-reports)
- Cox's Bazar Panel Survey (2019) 'Cox's Bazar Panel Survey'. Fact sheet. New Haven, United States: Innovations for Poverty Action and Yale MacMillan Centre
- Education Cannot Wait (ECW) (2018) *Education for Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh: Education Cannot Wait facilitated multi-year resilience programme 2018–2020* (www.educationcannotwait.org/downloads/reports-and-publications)
- GAGE consortium (2019) *Gender and adolescence: why understanding adolescent capabilities, change strategies and contexts matters*. Second edition. London, UK: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence/Overseas Development Institute
- Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2020) 'Corporal punishment of children in Bangladesh' (<https://endcorporalpunishment.org/reports-on-every-state-and-territory/bangladesh>)
- Gordon, E., Lee-Koo, K. and Jay, H. (2018) *Adolescent girls in crisis: voices of the Rohingya*. Woking, UK: Plan International and Monash University's Gender, Peace and Security (GPS) research programme
- Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) (2020) Situation report Rohingya refugee crisis, January 2020 (www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh/document/situation-report-rohingya-crisis-coxs-bazar-january-2020)
- Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) (2019a) Joint multi-sector needs assessment (J-MSNA): host communities – In-depth. August–September 2019
- Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) (2019b) Joint multi-sector needs assessment (J-MSNA): Rohingya refugees – In-depth. August–September 2019 (<https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/joint-multi-sector-needs-assessment-j-msna-rohingya-refugees-depth-august>)
- Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), REACH Initiative, IOM Needs and Population Monitoring, ACAPS, and Translations without Borders (2019). Bangladesh Multi-Sector Needs Assessment: *Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas*.
- Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR, UN Resident Coordinator for Bangladesh (2020) *Joint Response Plan for Rohingya humanitarian crisis: January to December 2020* (<https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/2020-joint-response-plan-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-january-december-2020>)
- Mahmoud, S. (2003). Female secondary school stipend programme in Bangladesh. Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4 Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality. UNESCO
- Sang, D. (2018) One year on: time to put women and girls at the heart of the Rohingya response. Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB for Oxfam International
- Tay, A.K., Islam, R., Riley, A., Welton-Mitchell, C., Duchesne, B., Waters, V., and Ventevogel, P. (2018) Culture, context and mental health of Rohingya refugees: a review for staff in mental health and psychosocial support programmes for Rohingya refugees. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Trines, S. (2019) Education in Bangladesh. World Education News and Reviews (WENR), 1 August (<https://wenr.wes.org/2019/08/education-in-bangladesh>)
- United Nations (2015) Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations
- United Nations Development Programme (2018) Impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx on host communities. Dhaka: UNDP Bangladesh (www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh/assessment/impacts-rohingya-refugee-influx-host-communities)
- United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. New York: United Nations
- UN General Assembly (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx)
- UNHCR (2019) 'Rohingya emergency' (www.unhcr.org/uk/rohingya-emergency.html)
- UNHCR (2018). Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Part II Global compact on refugees. Available: https://www.unhcr.org/gcr/GCR_English.pdf
- UNHCR (2019). *Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion*.
- UNICEF (2019b) *Beyond Survival, Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh want to learn*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: UNICEF
- UNICEF (2020a) Bangladesh humanitarian situation report no. 53: reporting period 01 January 2019 – 31 December 2019 (<https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-humanitarian-situation-report-no-53-1-january-31-december-2019>)
- UNICEF (2020b) Expanding education for Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh (www.unicef.org/rosa/stories/expanding-education-rohingya-refugee-children-bangladesh)
- UNICEF (2019) *Beyond survival, Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh want to learn*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: UNICEF
- Wake, C., Barbelet, V. and Skinner, M. (2019) *Rohingya refugees' perspectives on their displacement in Bangladesh: uncertain futures*. HPG Working Paper. London: Overseas Development Institute
- World Bank (2019) 'The Cox's Bazar Panel Survey: Baseline data on displaced Rohingya and their host population.' CBPS Brief 1, Poverty and Equity GP. Washington DC, United States: World Bank Group.