



Bangladesh

A case history of education provision for
refugees from 2017 to 2019



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Acronyms and abbreviations

\$	U.S. dollars
DEVCO	EU Department for International Cooperation and Development
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
ELCG	Education Local Consultative Group
ESA	education sector analysis
ESP	Education sector plan
GIEP	Guidelines for Informal Education Program
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KfW	German Development Bank
LCFA	Learning Competency Framework and Approach
MoDMR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
NGO	non-governmental organization
NTF	National Taskforce
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEND	Special Educational Needs or Disabilities
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Executive summary

This case history explores the provision of education for Rohingya refugees from the outset of the 2017 influx into Bangladesh to the end of 2019. Findings from this study contributed to a comparative study with Rwanda and Turkey, whose overarching objectives were:

- To document which factors in the early stages of a refugee response seem to determine whether refugees are included in national education systems as opposed to separate systems;
- To identify factors for further study that could shed light on essential program and policy actions that lead to greater effectiveness and sustainability of refugee education responses from the emergency stage forward.

The case history draws on:

- A review of more than 25 documents including reports, appeals, plans, academic articles, financial tables, and press releases (see Annex A for those referenced).
- 14 interviews with relevant experts, each semi-structured and lasting an average of 60 minutes (see Annex B for an anonymized list of interviewees).
- The findings of a coding analysis exercise with data provided by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which is reported on in full in the cross-cutting report.
- The sector expertise of the research team.

There are significant knowledge gaps across the sector regarding the most appropriate way to capture lessons learned from country-specific responses to refugee inclusion in national education systems. The practical working out of this experimental methodology provides an opportunity to reflect on and improve the way in which learning is captured and shared in such contexts.

Chapters 1 to 3 of the Bangladesh case study provide an overview of the research objectives, methodology, background context and key education response milestones in Bangladesh from pre-2017 until end-2019. Chapters 4 through 6 present findings from three key analytical themes as these influenced or impacted government and partner decisions and actions related to refugee education:

- Government policy and leadership
- Contributions and engagement of partners
- Humanitarian and development financing

The conclusions in Chapter 7 summarize key lessons learned for education sector partners in Bangladesh.

Context

Bangladesh has hosted Rohingya refugees since the 1970s. A small percentage of the Rohingya who sought asylum in Bangladesh in the 1990s were granted refugee status. Over time those refugees were eventually offered the national school curriculum in Bangla up to grade 8 through support from UNHCR, UNICEF, and finally Save the Children International in designated refugee camps, though advocacy never resulted in opportunities to sit for national exams for education certification. The vast majority of the Rohingya diaspora from the 1990s who lived adjacent to the camp were not accorded refugee status or the services associated with that status. Some non-status refugee students attended schools in the refugee-designated camps.

In August 2017, an estimated 745,000 Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh following unrest in Myanmar, making the Kutupalong refugee camp in the district of Cox's Bazar the world's largest refugee camp.

Analysis of theme 1: Government policy and leadership

The government provided Rohingya refugees who arrived during the August 2017 influx a Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals status, which permitted the humanitarian community to provide informal³ education, with the proviso that there would be no instruction in Bangla. The factors that led to policy decisions regarding education were not only technical but were influenced by the broader political discourse at the time.

In early 2018, an informal learning program called the Learning Competency Framework and Approach (LCFA) was developed for non-refugee status Rohingya children. Levels I and II, equivalent to preschool and grade 1, had been rolled out at the time of data collection. A factor that may have enabled this structured educational offering was the alignment of the approach with the goals and objectives of the government, since mobile learning centers could be moved upon repatriation—the solution selected by the Bangladeshi government, which has not yet signed the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. Close collaboration between the government, development and humanitarian education partners on program development and financing can be considered an important achievement in the context of Bangladesh. The national Education Sector Plan that is currently under development, supported by UNESCO through a GPE grant, offers an opportunity for further development, and government responsibility for refugee education in Bangladesh.

Key ministries involved in national education sector planning are the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. These ministries did not lead emergency phase planning regarding education provision for Rohingya refugees, however. Instead, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief coordinated all sectors of the emergency response.

Analysis of theme 2: Contribution and engagement of partners

The coordination structure that developed in the months after the 2017 influx culminated in an Inter-Sector Coordination Group comprising UN agencies and NGOs, as well as ad hoc participation from Bangladeshi government departments. Bangladesh also has an Education Local Consultative Group to cover all levels of formal and non-formal⁴ education.

Engagement between the government, humanitarian and development partners happened at different times within the response, with varying levels of input. The debate on what inclusion would look like in Bangladesh resulted in greater development partner engagement during the emergency than might have happened otherwise. Joint government-humanitarian-development partner visits to refugee camps; the humanitarian sector's engagement with national and district Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Ministry of Education representatives; the partner dialogue and collaboration resulting from development of the Learning Competency Framework and Approach; and the ability of established education partners to engage the government in dialogue on education for Rohingya children and youth are all examples of new ways of working in the context in Bangladesh that came about as a result of the influx.

Challenges for engagement between the government, humanitarian and development partners included the responsibility of all aspects of the response, including education, with Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief rather than line ministries; centralized rather than district decision making; lack of cross-agency linked strategy; risk aversion of partners with

³ See footnote 4.

⁴ *Non-formal education* is defined as education that is an institutionalized and intentional addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education. It can be distinguished from *informal* learning opportunities which are less organized and structured than non-formal education and may be provided as a temporary and ad-hoc response without any integration into the wider education system (see UIS, 2011).

established government relationships; and timing issues related to the 2018 election.

The consensus among respondents was that there is a desire for more effective humanitarian-development collaboration. Three factors that facilitated collaboration and coordination between humanitarian and development partners were engagement with donors as advocacy allies and the use of development funds for refugee education; an increasingly unified vision and coordinated approach by and within humanitarian and development partner organizations; and an existing national forum for all education actors in Bangladesh.

Inhibiting factors for a strong humanitarian-development collaboration included insufficient engagement of national and district education authorities with expertise; lack of considering host-community needs in refugee emergency education assessments; capacity gaps within agencies to reflexively consider programming for inclusion during emergencies; influential education donors being primarily development-focused and habituated; staff time and high turnover; and lack of coordinated advocacy across borders for some agencies.

Despite the challenges of collaboration on refugee education and inclusion in a context where international protection for refugees is not addressed through traditional instruments, the opportunity to work across humanitarian and development sectors and to problematize some of the issues related to sequenced action and financing can be considered an achievement in Bangladesh.

Analysis of theme 3: Humanitarian and development financing

There is a notable challenge in presenting a clear distinction between the humanitarian and development education financing and portfolios, both within the context of Bangladesh's Rohingya crisis, and in responses to refugee crises more generally.

An analysis of the available financial data reflects the importance of foreign assistance in responding to the 2017 Rohingya crisis, and the need for the international community to take more responsibility for financing refugee education. Respondents noted that the perceived lack of importance of ensuring the continuity of education, and the associated lack of financing for education initiatives, can have a significant negative impact on the uptake of educational activities once administered. The case in Bangladesh also suggests that including the needs of the host population could act as a key trigger for national sector-coordinating mechanisms to engage more effectively and efficiently.

To meet this challenge, \$8.3 million of unspent GPE funds were rechannelled into the Rohingya refugee crisis. Respondents noted that this set a precedent and was helpful for relationships between donors, UN agencies and the government as they collaborated on where to spend the funding. Because the GPE money was perceived as government money, it provided public acknowledgement of the importance of refugee education by the government. The pooled fund approach was also considered a good practice, particularly as it was combined with nationally owned and led, multi-year strategic planning. This enabled a "more systematic approach to primary education planning and funding" and "reduced the global tendency of contributing partners, donors or lenders to seek to apply their own standards for planning and subsequent reporting (Summative GPE country program evaluation 2020, 109)."

Financing by itself did not and will not change the overarching position of the government regarding the temporary nature of the Rohingya in Bangladesh. However, respondents considered that the use of development funding played a significant role in increasing the prioritization of refugee education in a context where the educational needs of unregistered populations had never been systematically addressed.

1. Introduction

1.1. Objectives of the case history

This case history explores the provision of education from the outset of the 2017 influx of Rohingya school-aged refugees⁵ in Bangladesh to the end of 2019. It has two overarching objectives:

- To document which factors in the early stages of a refugee response seem to determine whether refugees are included in national education systems, as opposed to separate systems.
- To identify factors for further study that could shed light on essential program and policy actions that lead to greater effectiveness and sustainability of refugee education responses from the emergency stage forward.

Within these objectives there are three areas of specific focus: government policy and leadership; the contribution and engagement of partners; and humanitarian and development financing. Each of these focus areas is linked to a set of research questions that guided the interview structure, analysis and presentation of the data. The research questions are included in full in Annex C.

1.2. Methodology

This case history on Bangladesh is one of three conducted within the overall study. The two accompanying case histories focus on Rwanda and Turkey. Each of them follows the same methodological approach in order to facilitate comparative analysis; however, the structure of the findings is tailored to each country context. This case history draws on:

- A review of more than 25 documents, including reports, appeals, plans, academic articles, financial tables and press releases (see Annex A for those referenced);
- 14 interviews with relevant experts, each semi-structured and lasting an average of 60 minutes (see Annex B for an anonymized list of interviewees);
- The findings of a coding analysis exercise, with data provided by GPE, which is reported on in full in the cross-cutting report; and
- The sector expertise of the research team.

It should be noted that the methodology is experimental in both its design and its application. There are significant knowledge gaps across the sector regarding the most appropriate way to capture lessons learned from country-specific responses to refugee inclusion in national education systems. The intention is that the practical working out of the methodology provides an opportunity to reflect on and improve the way in which learning is captured and shared in such contexts. This has resulted in a set of observations focused on the way in which the methodology could be refined for future studies of a similar nature, and which is presented in the cross-cutting report.

1.3. Structure and parameters of the case history

This case history begins by presenting a brief summary of the background context (Chapter 2), and an overview of key milestones regarding educational provision for refugees in Bangladesh from 2017 to 2019 (Chapter 3). Three analysis sections follow: Government policy and leadership (Chapter 4); Contribution and engagement of partners (Chapter 5); and Humanitarian and development financing (Chapter 6). The case history closes with key areas

⁵ The word "refugee" is used in this case history in reference to individuals who are forcibly displaced from their country of origin, regardless of their legal status within the host country. This is in order to conduct a cross-cutting analysis and discussion of findings across the three different country responses.

of learning for the sector (Chapter 7). Three annexes that provide additional information regarding the study methodology and cited resources are included.

This case history reviews insights from key actors during the Rohingya refugee response from 2017 to 2019, within the analytical framework presented by the research questions in Annex C. It does not explore the experience of other refugee groups in Bangladesh, and within the matter of the provision of education for Rohingya refugees it is considered that this analysis may not have captured the full nuances of the operational context, particularly as it relates to undocumented policy, partnership and financing decisions. These gaps, and ways to mitigate them in future similar studies are explored in more depth in an extended methodology described in Annex F of the cross-cutting report.

This case history is best read in conjunction with the associated outputs:

- Rwanda: a case history of education provision for refugees from 2012 to 2019
- Turkey: a case history of education provision for refugees from 2011 to 2019
- Historical mapping of education provision for refugees: a cross-cutting report

2. Background context

2.1. Refugees in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is not a signatory party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol, nor is it a signatory to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness. Bangladesh also does not have any domestic legal instruments on asylum or statelessness (Prodip 2017). In addition to the lack of legal instruments for asylum seekers, Bangladesh faces additional challenges for hosting large refugee populations such as prolonged natural disasters and inadequate education infrastructure in host communities in Cox's Bazar (Respondent E). Yet Bangladesh has been hosting Rohingya refugees since the 1970s, and the Kutupalong camp, in the district of Cox's Bazar, remains the world's largest refugee camp.

There is a complex history between the Rohingya population and the Government of Bangladesh. Prior to the August 2017 influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh, there were approximately 33,000 registered refugees in the Kutupalong and Nayapara registered refugee camps, who were recognized by the government as legal refugees. There were also more than 55,000 undocumented Rohingya refugees "residing in makeshift settlements and an estimated 300,000-500,000 unregistered refugees scattered around the country" (Summative GPE country program evaluation 2020, 6). In 2012, large numbers of Rohingya attempted to enter Bangladesh but they were refused entry. The government additionally ordered NGOs to stop the provision of services to Rohingya who were already in Bangladesh and discouraged resettlement efforts (Human Rights Watch 2018). Since August 2017, however, an estimated 745,000 Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh following unrest in Myanmar. The Government of Bangladesh refers to stateless Rohingya refugees who arrived following the 2017 unrest in Myanmar as "forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals" and not refugees; however the term refugee is used in this report for consistency with the other case histories.

Figure 2.1: Map of Bangladesh



2.2. Bangladesh's National Education System

National education is highly centralized in Bangladesh, and is governed by two ministries in Dhaka, the capital city. The Ministry of Education (MoE) oversees secondary and higher education as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) is dedicated to elementary education and non-formal education programs for out-of-school children and adults.

The Government of Bangladesh adopted a new and ambitious national educational policy in 2010 that extended compulsory education from grade five to grade eight, however at the time of data collection this had not yet been implemented. A common elementary core curriculum was also introduced, along with national examinations at the end of grades five and eight. The implementation of the policy remains challenging, however, due to inadequate school infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teacher training, and high dropout rates (WENR 2019).

2.3. Defining educational inclusion for refugees in Bangladesh

The term "inclusion" in the context of education for refugee children describes the participation of refugee children in mainstream national education systems in host country contexts. It differs from the term "inclusive", which has historically described education systems, approaches and programs that are explicitly accessible to children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). It also differs from "inclusive" as it has been increasingly used to refer to an approach that seeks to ensure the access, participation and learning of all children, in the language of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4⁶, UNESCO (1994), and Banham and Papakosta (2018).

Bangladesh provides a noteworthy example of the variation in how inclusion for refugee education is understood among different agencies and actors. Contextualizing the term and avoiding a universal definition of inclusion emerged as crucial during discussions with respondents. Several respondents spoke of inclusion as a continuum whereby education

⁶ SDG4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

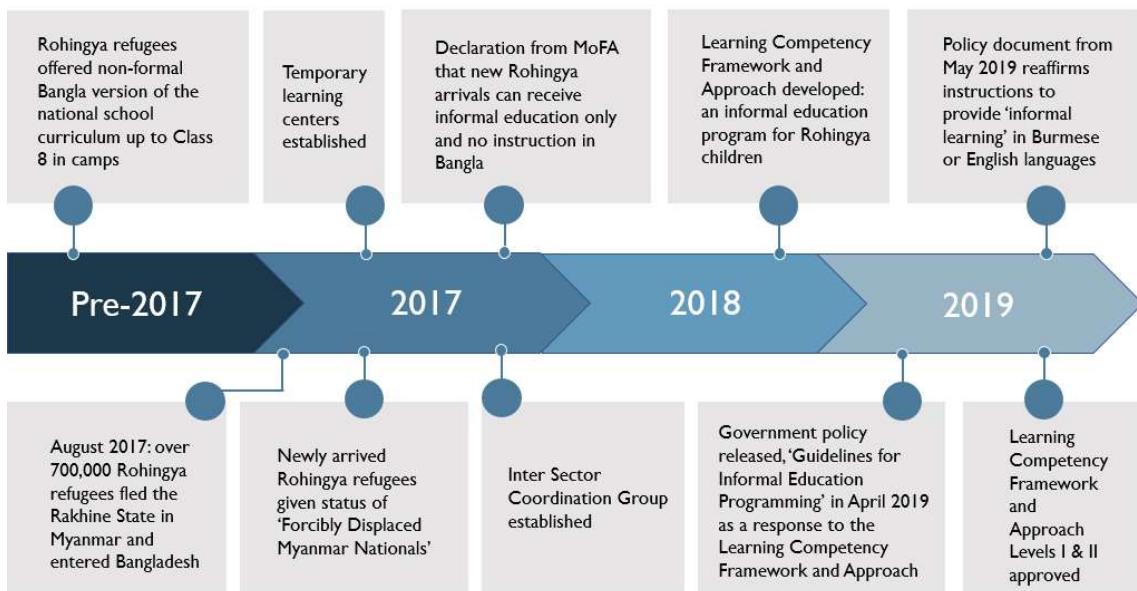
provision for Rohingya refugees exists from the beginning, and potential next steps are a recognized curriculum, accreditation, certification, and support for teacher training. Respondents also referred to how different agencies are positioned at different points on the inclusion continuum, some agencies advocating for operationalizing full inclusion from the outset of the crisis, and others advocating for incremental pragmatic advances. This presents a useful framework for engaging in the insights shared by key experts, in that it identifies a difference in ideological conviction, which has significant consequences for cross-agency collaboration and advocacy. The nuances of the operating context and the restrictions between points on this continuum are considered in the analysis sections below.

Regarding inclusion at the policy level, as part of the overall study, the research team critically reviewed the findings of a coding exercise conducted by GPE on the inclusion of refugees in education sector plans. A similar methodology was applied to education documents from Bangladesh. At the time of data collection, Bangladesh did not have an Education Sector Analysis (ESA) or an Education Sector Plan (ESP), but rather has pursued planning at the sub-sector level (Summative GPE country program evaluation 2020). It also has a specific plan for refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar outlined in its 2018 "Leaving No-One Behind" funding proposal for GPE, where it referenced the strategic objectives for education in the 2018 Joint Response Plan: (i) Provide immediate access to equitable learning opportunities in a safe and protective environment to crisis-affected refugee and host community children and youth (ages 3-24 years-old); (ii) Improve the quality of teaching and learning for refugee and host community children and youth, aligned with the MoE and MoPME and Education Sector standards, and increase teaching-related professional development opportunities; (iii) Increase refugee and host community participation and engagement in children's education (2018, Joint Response Plan, 2). This coding exercise is reported on in full in Annex D of the cross-cutting report.

3. Summary of key milestones

The timeline of this case history (2017 to 2019) presents the provision of education for refugees in Bangladesh following a major influx of Rohingya refugees in late August 2017. The case history tracks the evolution of the response over time with regard to the policy environment and government leadership structures; the collaboration and engagement between the government and humanitarian and development partners; the humanitarian and development financing mechanisms and impact; and considers the intersections of these three areas and the effect on education for Rohingya refugees. Figure 3.1 presents an overview of the key milestones regarding the provision of education for refugees in Bangladesh from 2017 to 2019. Milestones include key policy, partnership, and financing decisions, and activities that emerged from the review of background documents and interviews with key informants. Each of these is discussed in further detail in the subsequent analysis chapters.

Figure 3.1: Summary of key milestones



4. Government policy and leadership

This section presents findings regarding government policy on refugee education prior to the 2017 arrival of Rohingya refugees; the government ministries involved in the 2017 crisis response; and shifts in government policy on education for the Rohingya population between 2017 and 2019.

4.1. National policy environment pre-2017



It is helpful to frame this case history within the pre-2017 context and the broader history of the Rohingya community and its interaction with the Government of Bangladesh. The Rohingya refugees who remained in Bangladesh after arriving in the 1990s were offered a non-formal Bangla version of the national school curriculum up to grade 8 in the refugee camps run by Camp-in-Charges from the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner's (RRRC) office, with assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, they were not permitted to attend schools outside of the camps and could not access public examinations (Human Rights Watch 2019). District officials, through Upazila⁷ Education Offices, ensured the delivery of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board's teaching and learning materials free of cost, as applicable in other public schools. The daily management of teaching and learning processes were run by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors. Respondents also note the peaceful coexistence of host and refugee communities prior to the 2017 influx. In particular, the host community's attitude and support toward the refugee community was considered to be largely positive.

⁷ An *upazila* is a sub-district in Bangladesh. See: <https://www.citypopulation.de/php/bangladesh-admin.php>

4.2. Government ministries involved in the response

The Government of Bangladesh leads the response for Rohingya refugees. The National Taskforce (NTF) and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) leads the overall coordination from Dhaka, with MoDMR responsible for operational delivery. At the same time, the NTF chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) acts as the policy body. As chair of this taskforce, MoFA has taken the lead in coordinating the government response to the refugee influx, and in determining the nature of international coordination. Additionally, in Cox's Bazar, the RRRC under MoDMR is charged with the daily operation of the refugee response.

The key ministries involved in national education sector planning are MoE and MoPME. These ministries did not lead emergency phase planning regarding education provision for Rohingya refugees, however. MoDMR is responsible for the coordination of the emergency response and even though NTF is inter-ministerial, in this context MoE and MoPME are considered implementers of policies driven by MoDMR (Respondent F).

4.3. Policy shifts between 2017 and 2019

This section presents policy shifts and related activities that affected education for Rohingya refugees between 2017 and 2019.

2017: The outset of the crisis



In late August 2017, over 700,000 Rohingya refugees fled the Rakhine State in Myanmar and entered Bangladesh. In the initial two months after the August 2017 influx, it was widely considered that the Bangladeshi government would apply the same approach for the newly arrived Rohingya children as for those prior to the influx; that is, that the national curriculum would be provided in Bangla in the camps. However, the government offered an alternative position, and two major policy decisions followed in 2017:

- (i) Post-August 2017 Rohingya arrivals were given a status of "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals" instead of refugee status, which meant that they were unable to access the associated rights such as freedom of movement, access to public services and education (Human Rights Watch 2018).
- (ii) A decision from NTF in December 2017 declared that Rohingya children who arrived after August 2017 would receive informal education, and no instruction would be in Bangla (Respondents A and F). Around 3,000 temporary bamboo learning centers were built, and they started functioning by late October 2017. The education available in the learning centers consisted of basic and informal learning activities in English and Myanmar, with lessons in mathematics and life skills being offered in three daily shifts of two hours each (Human Rights Watch 2019).

It was widely understood that the Government of Bangladesh considered the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar as the most desirable outcome. This was planned from the beginning of the influx, despite advocacy from partners to consider the implications of a protracted situation (Respondents A, D, G and N). A cross-border committee set up protocols for repatriation; however, this did not progress, and Rohingya refugees in the camp were unwilling to return to Myanmar (Respondent I). Related to this, it was considered by respondents that the Government of Bangladesh believed that if Rohingya refugees were

offered access to the national education system it would create a strong incentive to stay within the country and inhibit their return to Myanmar.

2018: During the response



In early 2018, with no sign of repatriation of the refugees, an informal learning program called the Learning Competency Framework and Approach (LCFA) for Rohingya children was developed. This was coordinated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and developed by humanitarian education providers. LCFA was driven by the absence of an approved curriculum for the temporary learning centers, since they were not permitted to use the national curriculum of either Bangladesh or Myanmar. LCFA includes Levels I, II, III, and IV, considered comparable to preschool through grade 8, as an accelerated approach, compressing eight years of study into five. It uses the English and Myanmar languages for instruction. At the time of data collection, the government had endorsed Levels I and II in 2019, and most of the learning centers offered two daily shifts. There was a prolonged delay in the approval process, however, and the program remains unaccredited. Accreditation is an important consideration for refugees, regarding their buy-in for the educational approach. As articulated by one respondent, "Many [refugees] don't care about education if they don't have a certificate." (Respondent I).

The respondents' perspectives regarding the introduction of LCFA vary. Some suggest that it was a positive milestone because it offers a pragmatic approach to making the provision of education through a separate institution as effective as possible. In addition, the comparability of the framework to both the host country and the country of origin was considered a key feature. However, others assert that the introduction of LCFA in some ways legitimized the provision of education through separate institutions, which makes shifting to provision through national institutions considerably more difficult than it would be if establishing it from the outset of a response. Because this involved the development of a new framework and approach, it also meant that new processes, tools and materials were needed; these were costly and presented challenges in having a structured response with unified services between education partners (Respondent F).

A UN multi-year joint program of UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF titled "Cox's Bazar Education Support Programme," funded by Education Cannot Wait (ECW) also began in 2018 (UNESCO 2018). This built on the emergency response, and supported refugees in camps as well as improvements within host communities, with a focus on protection, the quality and relevance of teaching and materials, and community participation. These were the same strategic objectives as outlined in the 2018 Joint Response Plan.

2019: Moving forward from the response



LCFA Levels I and II were formally rolled out in January 2019. In April 2019, the government responded to LCFA through a policy titled Guideline for Informal Education Program (GIEP). GIEP stipulates the boundaries of education for Rohingya refugees, including the notice that it will only cover the first and second levels of education (for preschool and first-year primary).

Respondents again had mixed responses regarding the introduction of the guidelines. Some were ideologically opposed to the policy because they felt it legitimized a separate education response, whereas others saw it as a small public commitment to refugee education, and therefore an achievement (Respondent F). A policy document from May 2019 reaffirms the instruction to provide "informal learning" in English or Myanmar, and that the education policy "chooses to be modest in its aspirations" because of practical difficulties of space in the camps, limited resources, and limited learning time, since "it is expected that the repatriation [to Myanmar] will take place within two years" (Human Rights Watch 2019, 6).

The national ESP that is currently under development, and is supported by UNESCO through a GPE grant, offers an opportunity for further development, and government responsibility for refugee education in Bangladesh. It remains unclear from the observations of several respondents, however, whether this involvement may lead to the inclusion of the emergency response into the ESP, or if these are two separate and parallel discussions. In addition, there has been a more consistent presence from education ministries at the camp level. For example, the Additional Deputy Commissioner responsible for ICT and Education for the Cox's Bazar District is the co-chair of the education sector's Strategic Advisory Group (SAG), which is charged with facilitating the ongoing strategic direction of the education sector in Cox's Bazar.

Reasons behind the shifts in policy

There is a lack of clarity regarding the reason behind the difference in policy between the pre-August 2017 Rohingya arrivals and those who came during the late August 2017 influx. The dominant perspective is that the introduction of 700,000 refugees from the 2017 influx, in combination with the 300,000 Rohingya refugees already in-country, was an overwhelming prospect for the government, especially since Rohingya populations within Bangladesh by this point outnumbered the Bangladeshi population, at least in the two sub-districts of Teknaf and Ukhiya in Cox's Bazar (Respondent A). Further research is also needed to ascertain the role that national refugee law played in these decisions (for example, the ambiguity in the status of displaced populations), as well as the role of the international community in contributing to policy and leadership decisions, and the potential reflex to provide separate programs of education in emergencies rather than longer-term planning and provision through national institutions.

Education is a sector that is particularly vulnerable to politicization and issues of national security because of its inextricable link to citizenship and identity. In addition, globally, curriculum choices in refugee settings are not straightforward and technical but rather comprised of a series of considerations involving cultural, political, and economical areas (UNHCR 2015; Respondent F). It is noteworthy that many decisions within the Bangladeshi response were not driven by technical reasons. The importance of identity featured regularly in interviews, with particular emphasis on the sensitivity of the language of instruction within a context where language is so historically and culturally significant. There were no solutions offered for how or whether to try to separate the provision of education from issues of national identity. However, some noteworthy indirect pathways were discussed, such as focusing on host community needs in a long-term plan that aims to strengthen and bolster national education, and thereby strengthen national identity. In addition, respondents noted that when the Government of Bangladesh was provided with the logic of mobile learning centers, which could also be moved upon repatriation, it led to support for the provision of informal education, and therefore a policy change. It was the alignment of the approach to the goals and objectives of the government that instigated change.

5. Contribution and engagement of partners

This section presents an overview of the education partners that were involved in the emergency response; findings regarding government engagement with humanitarian and

development partners; collaboration and coordination between humanitarian and development partners; and emergency assessments conducted.

5.1. Education partners involved in the response

The humanitarian structure for coordination that developed in the months after the 2017 influx culminated in an Inter Sector Coordination Group, comprised of UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as ad hoc participation from Bangladeshi government departments. The group was structured around eight sectoral working groups, supported and led by a senior coordinator and a secretariat based in Cox's Bazar (Bowden 2018). In Dhaka, the Strategic Executive Group was established, co-chaired by UNHCR, the resident coordinator's office, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).⁸

Bangladesh also has a local education group, the Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG), to cover all levels of formal and non-formal education in the development sector. The group is chaired by the MoPME and co-chaired by UNICEF, and "is comprised of key development partners, international and national NGOs, and national civil society organizations" (Summative GPE country program evaluation 2020, 9). Information sharing regarding the provision of education for Rohingya refugees was made a standing agenda item for ELCG.

5.2. Government engagement with humanitarian and development partners

Engagement between the government and humanitarian and development partners happened at various times within the response, with varying levels of input. Respondents were asked to reflect on factors that facilitated engagement between the government and its humanitarian and development partners. Four factors emerged as significant: (i) The opportunities for collaboration and dialogue that emerged through the development of the LCFA. This involved an education group in Dhaka comprised of a technical team from MoPME as well as UN agencies, Save the Children, and CARE, with support from BRAC and the British Council for learning materials. It also included UNICEF representatives from Myanmar, which was considered a strength in developing the LCFA (Respondent I). (ii) Joint visits to the refugee camps by partners and government personnel. (iii) Relationship-building with MoPME and MoE representatives on the ground in Cox's Bazar. (iv) Leveraging long-term, established relationships between agencies and the government in order to build on pre-existing processes and dialogue. UNICEF is a long-term strategic partner with the government and was already present and working with Rohingya children prior to the 2017 influx, as were Save the Children and UNHCR, both of which had dedicated budgets and significant direct support to education. The presence of the pre-existing partnership between UNICEF and the government in particular demonstrated the way in which development partners may be able to scale communication and collaboration processes in emergency situations, building on established decision-making frameworks and networks of relationships and influence. This also demonstrated how, without a direct relationship to the line ministry, an agency may have been ill-positioned to exercise influence during the initial stages of the influx.

Six additional factors emerged as significant challenges for engagement between the government and its humanitarian and development partners: (i) A lack of sustained engagement from MoPME and MoE, as this was not within their remit or authority. However, there is now an opportunity presented in the fact that the education sector meetings have shifted to being co-located at the district education office to address this problem (Respondent F). (ii) A restrictive environment concerning what international agencies are permitted to do. (iii) Humanitarian and development partners who have established relationships with the government and separate development programs may not wish to risk their usual activities

⁸ Note that IOM was given coordination leadership regarding Rohingya refugees in 2013 for those who were not given refugee status.

through advocacy activities. In order for effective engagement and collaboration to take place, transparency is needed regarding agency agendas, particularly from organizations that are leading on key decisions within refugee education. In addition, there should be a broader mapping regarding any potential conflicts of interest. (iv) The timing of the election in Bangladesh in late December 2018, which likely had a significant impact on the willingness of actors to broker conversations with government officials. (v) Not having a linked, cross-agency strategy, which may have resulted in inefficiencies of coordination and missed opportunities when working with the government. (vi) The highly centralized nature of education service delivery, which may have left public education officials at the district level disempowered to meaningfully engage in the response, and work in coordination with partners without clear directives (Respondent F). Because the ministries are located in Dhaka and the government is highly centralized, respondents felt it was difficult to have the Directorate of Primary Education involved. While humanitarian actors would meet with the district officials, they were often waiting instruction from MoPME in Dhaka (Respondent A).

5.3. Collaboration and coordination between humanitarian and development partners

The consensus among respondents was the desire for more effective cross-agency collaboration, and the benefit of a holistic approach, in which humanitarian and development partners work toward shared goals and are allies in advocacy activities. As articulated by one respondent, "*We see the value in really investing in making the cross-organizational work happen. There were times when we went alone and it cost us a lot. Going with others is more effective.*" (Respondent C).

Three factors to facilitate collaboration and coordination between humanitarian and development partners emerged from the data: (i) Engagement with donors as advocacy allies, and the transition of development funds to be used for refugee education. Respondents emphasized the need to ensure that this translates on the ground, and that it goes to infrastructure and activities that encourage sustainability. (ii) A coordinated approach between humanitarian and development partners, as well as a unified vision and process between the different arms within partner organizations. An interagency discussion started in October 2018; it was informal to begin with, but considered highly beneficial because humanitarian and development actors were able to agree on a common advocacy line in early 2019 (Respondent E). This was to advocate for the use of the Myanmar national curriculum: "*This meets the government policy, the refugees want to learn in this language, and it serves as a compromise between actors that advocate for one end of the inclusion spectrum versus others who do not always see the ideal as a possibility*" (Respondent B). It was widely agreed that humanitarian and development work should be designed to complement each other, and that constructive and strategic conversations need to take place regarding how the activities of both sectors will lead to the realization of one another's goals, and that they are aligned with the SDGs. (iii) Having the pre-established national forum for all education actors in Bangladesh (the ELCG). After the influx, this group was able to open immediate discussions, drawing on both local and international resources.

Inhibiting factors for a strong humanitarian-development nexus were similarly considered. Five key areas emerged as significant: (i) The disconnect between education development partners in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, which resulted in difficulties in translating proposals into action on the ground. Further research is needed on this potential disconnect, however, as it was contested between respondents, with some noting the presence of agencies on both levels and within coordination structures. (ii) Capacity gaps within agencies in programming for emergencies, which may have triggered the reflex to provide short-term solutions. The implications of this may have been a perception of the early stages of the response as being isolated from longer-term investments by partners. Rather than linking the Rohingya response to development initiatives such as investments in teacher training or school infrastructure, several respondents shared the concern that the reflex of the sector is to

relieve immediate needs and "*not the humanitarian-development nexus that needs to be cultivated from the beginning including working with government*" (Respondent A). Other respondents strongly noted that there was a significant push from the humanitarian sector for inclusion of refugees in the national education system from the beginning of the response. (iii) Similar to the previous inhibiting factor, respondents reflected that most of the education donors were focused on development. The disconnect between development and education in emergencies created difficulty in advocating for policy changes, while also ensuring that humanitarian aid was being aligned with the needs of the refugees. (iv) Staff time and turnover was widely considered an inhibiting factor in effective collaboration and making progress: "*One of the challenges of Bangladesh is the number of people who transitioned in and out of roles during the early part of the response*" (Respondent D). Staff need to have time to engage in strategic advocacy planning, and activities such as mapping exercises to identify influential voices. (v) The lack of coordinated advocacy across borders for some agencies. Respondents from some agencies felt that the offices in Bangladesh and Myanmar could have worked more closely together to lobby the Myanmar government over the need for a curriculum.

5.4. Emergency and follow-up assessments

The way that humanitarian and development partners coordinate and collaborate may also impact the type of emergency and follow-up assessments that are conducted, and whether they collect equivalent information for host-community students. Data on host-community students is valuable for humanitarian actors as a way to bolster the humanitarian-development nexus and to work toward a systems-strengthening approach. In addition, this data can identify how activities could be disruptive to the host community, in order to make appropriate adaptations efficiently (Respondent C). While emergency assessments collected equivalent information for host-community students in some areas, respondents also noted that this depended on the location, and many argued that there was a missed opportunity from not focusing sufficiently on host-community students. This was arguably the result of an emergency-focused mindset in which refugees are reflexively segregated, as well as the lack of a clear position from the government regarding funding for the host community.

One consequence of this missed opportunity is that it feeds into polarization and tension between the host community and the refugee population. It was considered that the host community was highly receptive to the refugees in the beginning of the influx, but as the perception of resources being provided to refugee camps instead of host community areas of need developed, this escalated tensions. This is particularly the case in Cox's Bazar, which was already performing poorer than the average in education, had high drop-out rates, and then had schools closed because of influx-related issues (Respondent E). While budgets were not reallocated away from the host communities, more funding was likely put into the camps than into the host communities because of the nature of the emergency; the reflex to provide education through separate institutions; and the government position on the Rohingya crisis. Implications regarding this spending, and what it could have been spent on instead if an approach of inclusion had been used, should be presented to the Government of Bangladesh and the international community. Even while fundraising for the emergency specifically, funding should be accountable for issues of sustainability and strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus.

6. Humanitarian and development financing

This section presents the findings regarding the financial contributions to education for refugees during the response period; the humanitarian and development funding response and the implications for refugee education; and the efficiency of the provision of education through national institutions versus through separate institutions.

6.1. Financial contributions to education for refugees

International donor funding for education for Rohingya refugees was channeled through UNICEF and UNHCR, which coordinated education for Rohingya refugees who arrived after August 2017. Multilateral funding for education that was committed at the time of data collection includes a \$25 million World Bank grant, \$12 million from Education Cannot Wait, and \$8.3 million from GPE. The GPE funding was a reallocation of the initial 2015-2017 ESP implementation grant in response to the initial crisis. The resulting funding is currently managed by UNICEF and expected to be completed by 2020 (Summative GPE country program evaluation 2020). Major additional donations for education include: (i) \$19.2 million from Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah Foundation; (ii) \$10 million from the German Development Bank (KfW); (iii) \$8.2 million from Canada; (iv) Several multimillion-dollar grants to UNICEF reported by the USA; and (v) \$87 million as part of a September 2019 grant reported by the UK to support education (Human Rights Watch 2019).

The total reported funding for the Education Cluster is as follows, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs's (OCHA) Financial Tracking Services data⁹ for the Joint Response Plan:

- 2017: Response Program/Appeal Funding for the Education Cluster: \$2 million. Required funding: \$26.3 million. Coverage: 7.6 percent.
- 2018: Response Program/Appeal Funding for the Education Cluster: \$38.6 million. Required funding: \$47.3 million. Coverage: 81.5 percent.
- 2019: Incoming Funding for the Education Sector: \$39 million. Required funding: \$59.5 million. Coverage: 65.5 percent.

The financial data reflects the importance of foreign assistance in responding to crises, with the above demonstrating that the response plans received less than 40 percent of the amount requested (Summative GPE country program evaluation 2020). Respondents also emphasized the need for the international community to take more responsibility for financing refugee education, and to make a long-term commitment that includes the needs of the host population. This could act as a key trigger for allowing other coordinating mechanisms to work more effectively and efficiently. A further example of this is the multi-year Cox's Bazar Education Support Program, which seeks to support both refugee and host community children as well as teachers. It has confirmed or pledged financing from: Global Affairs Canada, Education Above All, ECW, the European Union Department for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), the Government of Finland, the Government of Japan, the Government of the Republic of Korea, GPE, KfW, the King Abdullah Foundation, Swiss Solidarity, the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the World Bank, and other donors.

6.2. Humanitarian and development funding response

Initially funding structures for the provision of education for Rohingya refugees were delivered through UNICEF and UNHCR because of the regulatory challenges of funding NGOs and the need for quick operationalization. This has changed significantly, however, with other organizations obtaining funds directly outside of the UNICEF/UNHCR framework (Respondent F). For humanitarian agencies that have access to international financing for education in Bangladesh, there are government restrictions regarding how those agencies can spend the money for Rohingya refugees (Human Rights Watch 2019). Several respondents noted the limitations of diversity in the initial approach offered, which was needed in order to address key gaps in the response: "*Funding was almost entirely going through the UN or through large national NGOs... This limited the diversity that was needed to address key gaps in the*

⁹ See: <https://fts.unocha.org/>

response" (Respondent A).

Respondents also noted the significant challenge in presenting a clear distinction between humanitarian and development financing and portfolios, both within the context of the Rohingya crisis and in crisis responses more generally. This is a challenge both within the different arms of individual organizations like international NGOs, as well as conceptually, concerning how to effectively use development financing during a humanitarian response. When a donor country provides bilateral development funding, it is not always possible to use these funds for a humanitarian response. This is particularly noteworthy in a context such as the one in Bangladesh, where the effective use of development funding to enhance the provision of education for refugees and to create pathways for an inclusive approach that could ultimately serve to enhance the capacity of the national system, and improve education for the host communities as well. However, during a humanitarian response it is easy for education funding to be deprioritized in order to focus on shelter, health care, and other sectors that are felt to represent more immediate needs. It was considered by several respondents that the perceived lack of importance of ensuring the continuity of education, and the associated lack of financing for education initiatives, can have a significant negative impact on the uptake of educational activities once administered.

There is also a relationship between funding and the government's intention for the immediate repatriation of Rohingya refugees, which affects financing areas such as transportation and infrastructure (for example, building permanent school buildings). Indeed, the use of development financing for Rohingya refugees could be considered sensitive.

While financing may play a role in altering the narrative, the position of respondents, and the background documentation show that financing by itself did not and will not change the overarching position of the government regarding the temporary nature of the Rohingya in Bangladesh. However, many respondents considered that development funding played a significant role in increasing the prioritization of refugee education. This included the \$8.3 million unspent GPE funds that were rechanneled into the Rohingya refugee crisis. Respondents noted that this set a precedent, and that it was helpful for facilitating relationships between donors, UN agencies and the government as they collaborated on deciding where to spend the funding. As a result, the remaining balance of the GPE grant was allocated to the Rohingya refugees rather than returned to GPE. Because this money was perceived as government money, it also provided a public acknowledgement of the importance of refugee education from the government. The pooled fund approach was also considered a good practice from Bangladesh, particularly as it was combined with nationally-owned and led, multi-year strategic planning. This enabled a "more systematic approach to primary education planning and funding" and "reduced the global tendency of contributing partners, donors or lenders to seek to apply their own standards for planning and subsequent reporting" (Summative GPE country program evaluation 2020, 109).

6.3. Efficiency of education provision through national institutions versus provision through separate institutions

It was widely considered that the provision of education through national institutions is more efficient than provision through separate institutions; however, there is a need for additional, and rigorous research in order to strengthen the evidence base. In addition, the research needs to be packaged more clearly and accessibly in order to facilitate conversations with government decision makers at the outset of refugee responses, and aligned with government priorities. These conversations should consider the nuances and context of each crisis, rooted in the broader political discourse of the time.

7. Conclusions and areas of key learning

7.1. Conclusions

This case history explores the provision of education from the outset of the 2017 influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh in order to: (i) document the factors in the early stages of a refugee response that seem to determine whether refugees are included in national education systems as opposed to being educated in separate systems; and (ii) to identify factors for further study that could shed light on essential program and policy actions that can lead to greater effectiveness and sustainability of refugee education responses from the emergency stage forward.

Factors in the early stages of the refugee response in Bangladesh, and their link to the provision of education for Rohingya refugees through separate or through national institutions were analyzed. There remains a lack of clarity regarding the reason behind the difference in government policy between the pre-August 2017 Rohingya arrivals and those that came during August 2017. The dominant perspective is that the introduction of 700,000 refugees from the 2017 influx, in combination with the 300,000 Rohingya refugees already in-country was an overwhelming prospect for the government, which desired repatriation of the refugees as the outcome of any activities. In addition, education is a sector that is particularly vulnerable to politicization and issues around national security because of its inextricable link to citizenship and identity. Because of this, the factors that led to policy decisions regarding education are not only technical; they were also influenced by the broader political discourse at the time. In addition, respondents noted that when the Government of Bangladesh was provided with the logic that mobile learning centers could also be moved upon repatriation, it led to the support of the provision of informal education, and thus a policy change.

Numerous factors emerged as requiring further study that could shed light on essential program and policy actions that lead to greater effectiveness and sustainability of refugee education responses, including: (i) The role that national refugee law played in shaping the difference in policy between pre-August 2017 Rohingya arrivals and those that came during August 2017. (ii) The role of the international community in contributing to policy and leadership decisions, and the potential reflex to provide separate programs of education in emergencies rather than longer-term planning. (iii) The perspectives and insights from more government officials, from a range of ministries (MoFA, MoE, etc.), as suggested by Respondent E, in order to provide additional insight into refugee education from a national perspective. This should also be accompanied by the inclusion of local NGOs, civil society and local community members as voices in future research. (iv) How to align multiple agencies within an approach to refugee education that focuses on pragmatic and incremental change, instead of advocating for the full inclusion of refugees in the national education system; and the impact this may have on education for refugees.

7.2. Areas of key learning

The Bangladeshi case history presents a number of important lessons learned for the sector regarding the provision of education for Rohingya refugees. These are summarized in the points below.

The education sector is particularly vulnerable to politicization and issues of national security because of its inextricable link to citizenship and identity. It is noteworthy that many decisions within the Bangladeshi response were not technically driven. The importance of identity featured regularly in interviews, with a particular emphasis on the importance of the language of instruction, within a context where language is so historically and culturally significant, and contested. This may lead to withholding host-country language courses because of the desire to enable quick repatriation of refugees. Linked to this, there is often sensitivity regarding the specific terminology and language used. Advocacy campaigns

and activities should therefore be contextualized, with careful attention paid to the language of instruction, and they should be grounded in a historical study of the host country's education policy and perception regarding refugees.

Refugees should be meaningfully involved in the education response. There were conflicting opinions among the respondents regarding whether or not Rohingya refugees wanted to learn the Bangladeshi curriculum and be taught in the Bangla language. There is therefore a critical need for the inclusion of refugee voices in the development of educational activities and curriculum for them, particularly if significant resources are going into the development of a specific curriculum, or informal learning framework.

Expectations for host country governments should be managed with care and understanding. Successes, no matter how small they are perceived to be, should be celebrated and built upon.

Humanitarian agencies should employ a long-term approach in order to ensure the relevance of the provision of education for refugees. Similarly, it is of critical importance for development agencies to understand the need for and cost-effectiveness of financing humanitarian educational interventions. This involves working collaboratively with humanitarian partners to promote dialogue and build a strategy that will support and bolster the national education system through the provision of education for refugees.

The points of agreement between actors should be focused on and emphasized. In the case of Bangladesh, agreement could not be reached on either the language of instruction or the curriculum; so instead, emphasis was on providing access to quality education for all. Focusing on even a single point of agreement may break through other barriers by creating momentum in one element of inclusion.

Local staff should be given a platform so that they can engage in developing a strategy. Respondents noted that coordination would have benefited from closer communication between Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. To realize this, local staff knowledge, expertise and connections need to be leveraged in order to support advocacy and effective decision making. The current default situation is often international staff holding the key decision-making roles. There is a clear need to avoid this default position in future, and to give local staff more of a platform for engaging in strategy.

More contextualized data is needed in order to present how the inclusion of refugees in mainstream education is a more efficient approach than offering a separate response. This should include the benefits to the national system, and should cost both types of responses in a meaningful way in order to understand what is required. It should also offer details regarding how such an approach can be efficiently operationalized.

There needs to be more effective ways of capturing learning for the sector. There is a lack of documentation of decisions and the rationale behind them, although respondents note that there is a good reason for this, as it is a highly political discussion, with various sensitivities. The available documentation is largely technical, and does not include discussion of these nuances or sensitivities, which makes it challenging to conduct analyses of the response. More detailed and clearer documentation is needed in order to improve institutional memory.

The cross-cutting report presents key learning from each of the three country contexts in further detail, as well as sectoral recommendations, and areas for further research.

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Annex B: List of interviewees

- 10 interviews with staff of UN agencies
- 3 interviews with staff of international non-governmental organizations
- 1 interview with government

Annex C: Research questions

Research area 1: Government policy and leadership

Primary and secondary research questions

RQ1a: How have different governments addressed the issue of whether and how to include refugees in national education systems?

- What was the national policy on inclusion of refugees prior to the crisis?
- To what degree did ministries involved in the national education sector planning lead emergency-phase planning? If they did not lead it, to what degree were they involved?
- Was there any shift in government policy toward educational assistance for refugees and their access to the national education system during the course of the crisis? If so, what factors triggered such change? Did any particular factors incentivize/disincentivize such a change?

RQ1b: What can be said about how these approaches have affected the sustainability and relevance of the education offered for refugees?

Research area 2: Contribution and engagement of partners

Primary and secondary research questions

RQ2a: How was the response influenced by governments' engagement with humanitarian and development partners?

- To what extent are education partners split along the lines of development and humanitarian response, and how do these links (or lack thereof) support or hamper an integrated, longer-term approach for refugee education?
- What can be said about the actions and measures undertaken by development actors during the emergency phases in these three cases, that have supported or hampered the transition of refugees to national systems?
- How did development partners (including an education sector planning body) engage with humanitarian education actors during the crisis? Did development actors take part in/contribute to: (i) an emergency coordination mechanism established for the crisis; (ii) emergency assessments; (iii) developing the education chapter of the emergency and/or refugee response plan?
- Did emergency assessments collect equivalent information for host community students?
- Did emergency response plans fund government or partner action, or both?
- To what degree did humanitarian partner action contribute to education sector planning goals as articulated in ESPs or the equivalent?

RQ2b: How did this engagement support or hamper an integrated, longer-term approach for refugee education?

- What can be said about actions and measures undertaken by humanitarian actors during the emergency phases in these three

cases that have supported or hampered the transition of refugees to national systems?

Research area 3: Development and humanitarian financing

Primary and secondary research questions

RQ3a: How was the refugee education response affected by humanitarian and development financing?

- What proportion of the joint humanitarian funding response contributed to programs that supported refugee inclusion, either through direct support to public systems or learning support that led to inclusion (for example, national accelerated education programs)?
- Is it possible to accurately estimate the international financial contribution to education for refugees?
 - In Rwanda, for responses since the Kigeme response
 - In Turkey, prior to and following the decision to include Syrian learners in the national system
 - In Bangladesh, since 2017
- What impediments, if any, exist to gathering accurate estimations of international humanitarian and development financial contributions to education for refugees in each context?
- What data is needed to determine whether integrated programs for refugees are more efficient than parallel responses?