

WORKING PAPER

# POLITICAL ECONOMY AND (IN)COHERENCE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The displacement of Rohingya people poses a complex challenge for humanitarian, development, and public sectors in Bangladesh. It is considered a 'crisis within a crisis' as Cox's Bazar, which hosts a majority of displaced Rohingya people, is one of the country's most deprived districts that is increasingly affected by recurrent climate shocks. Seven years into the crisis, approximately half a million Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar continue to depend on temporary learning centres and religious schools. Despite considerable efforts to improve the quality of education, learning outcomes remain low with nearly 8 out of 10 children under the age of 12 unable to read.

This paper delves into the political economy of the education system in Cox's Bazar, exploring the underlying causes of dissonance between the official commitments and the day-to-day delivery of education by different actors. Challenges inherent to a protracted crisis are exacerbated by the Government's reluctance to recognize post-2017 Rohingya arrivals as refugees, driven by the Government's objective to not bear disproportionate financial responsibility for the Rohingya crisis response.

The paper sets its analysis against a conceptual framework that considers education system coherence and examines the alignment of the system along both horizontal and vertical axes. Through this framework, the research finds that while there is a shared commitment and horizontal coordination among humanitarian, development, and government actors in alleviating the pressure on the host community, the humanitarian-development nexus has gradually faded from Joint Response Plans to the Rohingya Crisis. The waning of nexus rhetoric is likely a consequence of reduced donor funding driven by global-level shifts in aid prioritisation.

Operationally, the horizontal coordination among education providers in Cox's Bazar is consistently recognised as a strength, notwithstanding high-level leadership tensions within the humanitarian sector and the competition for funding among local providers.

Looking along the vertical - national, state, and local - tiers of action, it appears that vertical incoherence persists in the humanitarian education sector. To some extent, this incoherence stems from insufficient inclusion of the Rohingya community and local NGOs in crucial decision-making processes. Local NGOs report being engaged only at the point of service delivery coordination, after the overarching strategies and funding allocations have already been decided. In the early years of the response, there was also a

normative incoherence between the humanitarian sector and the Rohingya community as to what education for Rohingya learners should look like. These factors led to suboptimal dynamics and operations for ensuring the quality and continuity of education.

Within this context of education system incoherence, it can be noted that the current policy focus on the rollout of the Myanmar curriculum, while broadly welcomed, is poised to fall short in improving learning outcomes. This is due to misalignment between funding cycles, data and monitoring systems, and provider-level incentives. Additionally, the rollout of the Myanmar curriculum highlights tensions between short-term humanitarian funding modalities and the long-term aims of the humanitarian education systems in protracted conflict and crises.

The analysis presented in this paper points towards several key recommendations for strengthening education system coherence to enhance access, quality, and continuity of education for both Rohingya and host communities:

- Transition from a reactive financing model to predictable and flexible humanitarian funding;
- Involve the Rohingya community not only in service delivery coordination but also in decisions regarding overarching education strategies and the allocation of financial resources;
- Allocate sufficient resources to address the scarcity of Myanmar language skills among Education Sector staff through local problem-solving mechanisms.
- Establish secure data-sharing platforms for enhanced usability of existing data; and
- Create financial incentives for providers to track and evaluate learning outcomes, beyond student enrolment.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>7</b>
Figure 1. ERICC Conceptual Framework for education system coherence in conflict and protracted crises in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazaar	
Figure 2. Dynamic features and components that influence education system coherence in conflicts and protracted crises	
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Overarching research approach and questions	
B. Data collection and analysis	
<b>FINDINGS</b>	<b>12</b>
A. Context	
1. The Rohingya displacement within the Bangladesh political settlement	
2. The state of education in Cox's Bazar	
Table 1. Host community learning outcomes in 2017 based on NSA survey results	
B. Norms: formal and informal rules of education provision	
1. Rohingya refugees	
2. Host community	
C. Capacities: leadership and coordination of the Education Sector	
D. Operations: financing and monitoring of education delivery	
1. Financing and planning	
Figure 3. Heatmap of humanitarian and development education projects in Bangladesh	
Figure 4. Heatmap of humanitarian and development education projects in Bangladesh	
Table 2. Education Sector funding targets	
2. Data systems and learning quality	
Figure 5. Dynamic features and components that influence education system coherence in conflicts and protracted crises	
E. Evolving dynamics: education provision on Bhasan Char Island	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>ANNEX 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>ANNEX 2: BREAKDOWN OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>ANNEX 3: PEA TOPIC GUIDE FOR TOP-UP INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>ANNEX 4: ODI IRB ETHICS APPROVAL</b>	<b>55</b>

## ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BROUK	Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
ERICC	Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HRW	Human Rights Watch
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	international NGO
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISCG	Inter Sector Coordination Group
KII	key informant interview
LCFA	Learning Competency Framework and Approach
MOE	Bangladesh Ministry of Education
MPME	Bangladesh Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSA	National Student Assessment
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEA	political economy analysis
PEDP	Primary Education Development Project
READ	Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development
ROSC	Reaching Out of School Children
RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNB	United News of Bangladesh
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya displacement in Bangladesh is a protracted ‘crisis within a crisis’ and stands as one of the most challenging global contexts for humanitarian and development actors to navigate. The Government of Bangladesh does not officially recognise Rohingya who arrived after 2017 as refugees<sup>1</sup> and insists on their repatriation to Myanmar. As a result, Rohingya access to education and other social rights is a contentious issue: the government sees institutionalising social provision for refugees as impossible given its strained budget, and incompatible with the goal of eventually repatriating Rohingya.

This leaves, as of 2023, a staggering half a million Rohingya children residing in Cox’s Bazar deprived of access to formal education (UNICEF, 2023), and reliant on non-formal learning centres run by international or national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or on religious education in Madrasas. While humanitarian actors have made significant efforts to improve the quality of education resources and support, learning outcomes among Rohingya children remain low, and the majority are not able to read and write. A recent baseline learning survey in one of the camps found that 78% of Rohingya children aged 6–12 were non-readers (Diazgranados et al., 2022). Among those who can read, nearly all (96.9%) do not understand what they are reading. As of 2023, about 16% of children aged 3–14 and 81% of adolescents aged 15–24 do not have access to education in the refugee camps (Hossain, 2023).

Additionally, Cox’s Bazar is one of Bangladesh’s more deprived districts, with the Rohingya displacement amplifying pressures on the local community. Learning outcomes for the host community have historically been among the lowest in the country, although basic reading and maths skills are still higher than among Rohingya children (see Table 1 in the Context section). Since both Rohingya and host communities are conflict-affected populations, this paper touches on education for both, albeit with a bias towards the former.

Attempts to coordinate humanitarian and development investment in Rohingya and host community education have achieved only limited success in relation to creating a coherent education system. Aspirations to coordinate the response are reflected in the Joint Response Plan objectives to ‘provide safe and equitable availability and access to Myanmar curriculum for Rohingya [refugees]’ and to ‘support education services for host community children’ (ISCG, 2023). As part of the joint strategy, development actors have shifted their regional focus within Bangladesh to provide more basic education projects in Cox’s Bazar and have allocated grants to cover humanitarian needs. Nonetheless, the possibility of a coherent education response in practice remains limited because of the dissonance in norms and incentives across the development and humanitarian sectors, as well as varying capacities to deliver on set-out objectives as a result of government restrictions. It is the causes of dissonance between education commitments on paper and the provision of education on the ground that this paper attempts to unpack.

By analysing the political economy of education provision for refugees and host communities and the consequent (in)coherences in the education system, this paper aims to identify opportunities for improving access, quality and continuity of education in Cox’s Bazar. The paper first presents a conceptual framework that builds on previous Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) analysis of education system in Northeast Nigeria (Sarwar et al., 2023) and other frameworks relevant to education system coherence in emergencies (Pritchett, 2015; Burde et al., 2016; Nicolai et al. 2016, 2019; Klm et al., 2022; Burde et al. 2023). It then sets out our methodology. It goes on to describe the context of the education system in Cox’s Bazar and then analyses it with the help of the conceptual categories of norms, capacities and operations. While the paper primarily addresses the education system within Cox’s Bazar, it also briefly discusses relevant dynamics relating to education on Bhasan Char Island.

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<sup>1</sup> The Government of Bangladesh refers to the Rohingya community in Bangladesh as ‘forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals.’ The UN system refers to this population as Rohingya refugees, in line with the applicable international frameworks. This paper uses the term refugees. ‘Affected population’ refers to both Rohingya and Bangladeshi host communities.

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study forms part of the Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium, which seeks to identify the most effective approaches for improving access, quality and continuity of education to support sustainable and coherent education systems to provide holistic learning and development for children in conflict and crisis. It aims to address gaps in the quantity and quality of evidence concerning education in conflict and protracted crisis: evidence that exists is often fragmented across a diversity of research foci, disciplinary perspectives, and methods used (Nicolai et al., 2016; Bergin, 2017; Burde et al., 2023). This study sits alongside political economy analyses on the coherence of education in five other ERICC focus countries, including Nigeria (Sarwar et al., 2023). ERICC has developed a conceptual framework to position research in the sector and localise gaps in existing research (Kim et al., 2022), which identifies four drivers of learning and development: access<sup>2</sup>, continuity,<sup>3</sup> quality and coherence.

**In this paper we treat education outcomes, typically measured as basic literacy and numeracy skills, as indicators of education system quality.** This departs somewhat from the ERICC framework, which assesses quality of education by looking at education system inputs, including quality of resources and support within classrooms/schools, households and communities and quality of relationships, practices and interactions necessary for holistic learning and development (Kim et al., 2022, p. 6). This approach acknowledges that children's learning outcomes are heavily influenced by factors outside of the schooling system, such as the first three to six years of preschool learning (Filmer et al., 2020). However, clearly, children are not accessing quality education if, after several years of schooling, they cannot read and understand a simple sentence. According to the literature on the 'global learning crisis,' education can be of low quality even if there are several high-quality inputs, such as new classrooms and school materials, teacher training or curricula, because of incoherence between different elements of the system (Angrist et al., 2021; World Bank et al., 2022) – hence our use of literacy and numeracy outcomes as a useful proxy for broader education quality.

**At the same time, our understanding of 'quality' considers the specific needs of children living in contexts of protracted conflict.** For children who experience recurrent violence and displacement, socio-emotional skills, which can protect their mental health in the long run, as well as vocational skills, which can help them navigate severely limited labour markets, can be seen as more urgent than basic academic skills. As such, it can be argued that evaluations of the quality of available education in crisis should put more emphasis on cognitive and socio-emotional skills, executive function development and other aspects of physical and mental health support. Unfortunately, data on these aspects of education are typically not available for conflict-affected populations. As such, this paper reflects on the availability of mental health interventions and vocational skills training as part of the non-formal education system.

**In this paper, we treat horizontal coherence as interactions across stakeholder groups.** While Pritchett's framing of system coherence for learning and other purposes highlights a range of factors internal to the education system, it does not place great emphasis on the role of external actors. This contrasts with a parallel understanding of the term used in development cooperation: that of 'humanitarian–development coherence.' Humanitarian–development coherence, sometimes framed more widely as part of a humanitarian–development–peace nexus, is the combined effort of many actors to analyse settings, define collective outcomes and discover methods to work better together, based on their comparative advantages, principles and mandates (OCHA, 2017; OECD, 2017). In education research, theorisations of humanitarian–development coherence have emphasised how external actors can find greater alignment in support of education systems (Nicolai et al., 2019; INEE, 2021a; Sommers et al., 2022). In practical terms, humanitarian–development coherence in education can include protecting the integrity of humanitarian

<sup>2</sup> Access: programmes and policies will improve children's holistic learning and development to the extent that they improve access to education – within schools and classrooms as well as in households and communities (especially in distance learning conditions or other home- or community-based learning). (Kim, et al., 2022, p. 6).

<sup>3</sup> Continuity: sustained exposure to education that allows progression in both learning and grade/school transition (Kim, et al., 2022, p. 6). Please refer to the detailed discussion in the text for our definition of education quality.

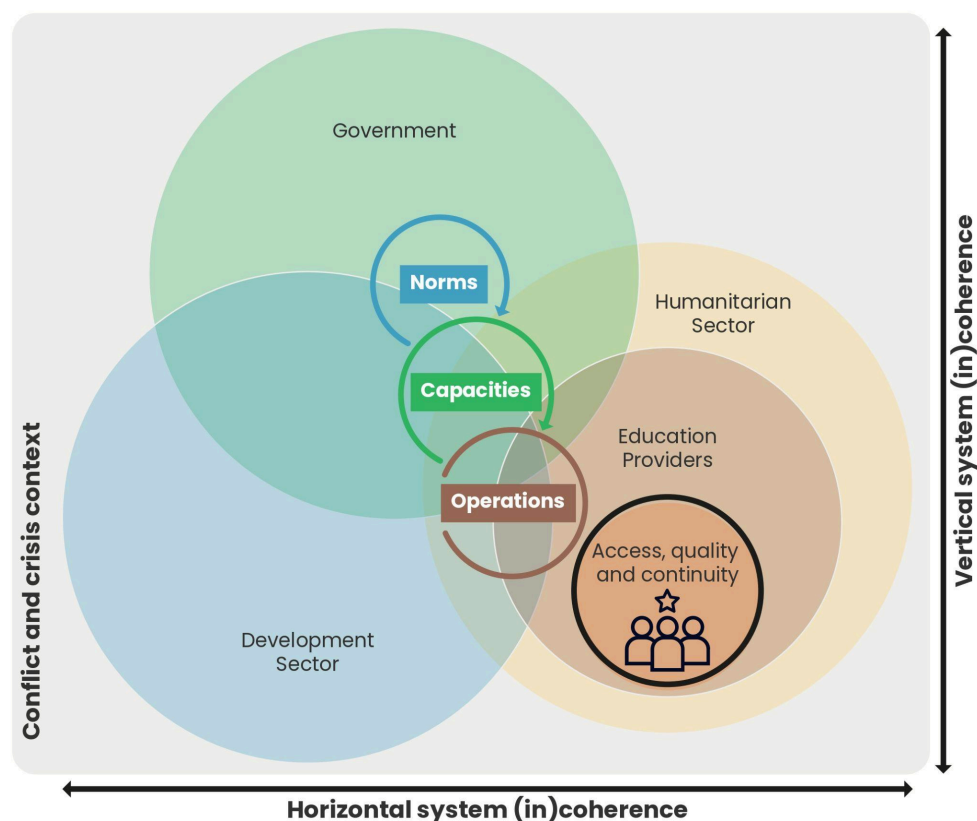
and development spaces, layering interventions for maximum impact, working in the same locations and identifying shared outcomes (Sommers et al., 2022). A key applied framework developed by Nicolai et al. (2019) and further applied by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2021a) highlights norms, capacities and operations as analytical categories; we have adopted these as the framing for our analysis.

**Our approach further considers vertical coherence across national, state and local tiers of action**, going beyond a more typical horizontal understanding of coherence used by humanitarian and development actors. In the ERICC Conceptual Framework, access, quality and continuity are each framed as having a focus at the local systems level, whereas coherence is located at the policy systems level (Kim et al., 2022, p. 9). Contrary to the ERICC framework, research presented here locates issues of coherence as relevant vertically across local systems through to national/international policies drawing extensively on Pritchett (2015)'s theorisation of education 'system coherence' for different purposes. According to Pritchett, many of the systems with low learning outcomes are coherent for high rates of school enrolment but not for student learning. This conceptualisation of 'coherence for different purposes' helps us draw out factors that prevent the achievement of basic numeracy and literacy skills among Rohingya. Pritchett further sets out coherence as existing in the feedback loops within and across relationships of accountability between education strategies, financing, workforce incentives and information – these are incorporated into our ideas of education system coherence as outlined below (Figures 1 and 2).

**This paper takes these divergent concepts and links elements of 'coherence for learning' to those of 'humanitarian–development coherence,' going beyond the analysis of aid cooperation to explicitly encompass government and local actors.** Placing learners at the centre, the analysis highlights the role of education providers (both state and non-state) within broader roles and responsibilities as arising in Cox's Bazaar. While the framework as visualised in our Nigeria analysis positions this within government responsibilities, education provision in this context is *de facto* managed largely through the humanitarian sphere, although in concert with both the government and the development sector. An interplay of norms, capacities and operations further determines the space to achieve idealised education offers as well as learning opportunities in practice. Most critically, this can result in both (in)coherence horizontally across stakeholder groups and vertically across national, state and local tiers of action. Figure 1 illustrates how these linkages and framing play out in the Bangladesh context.



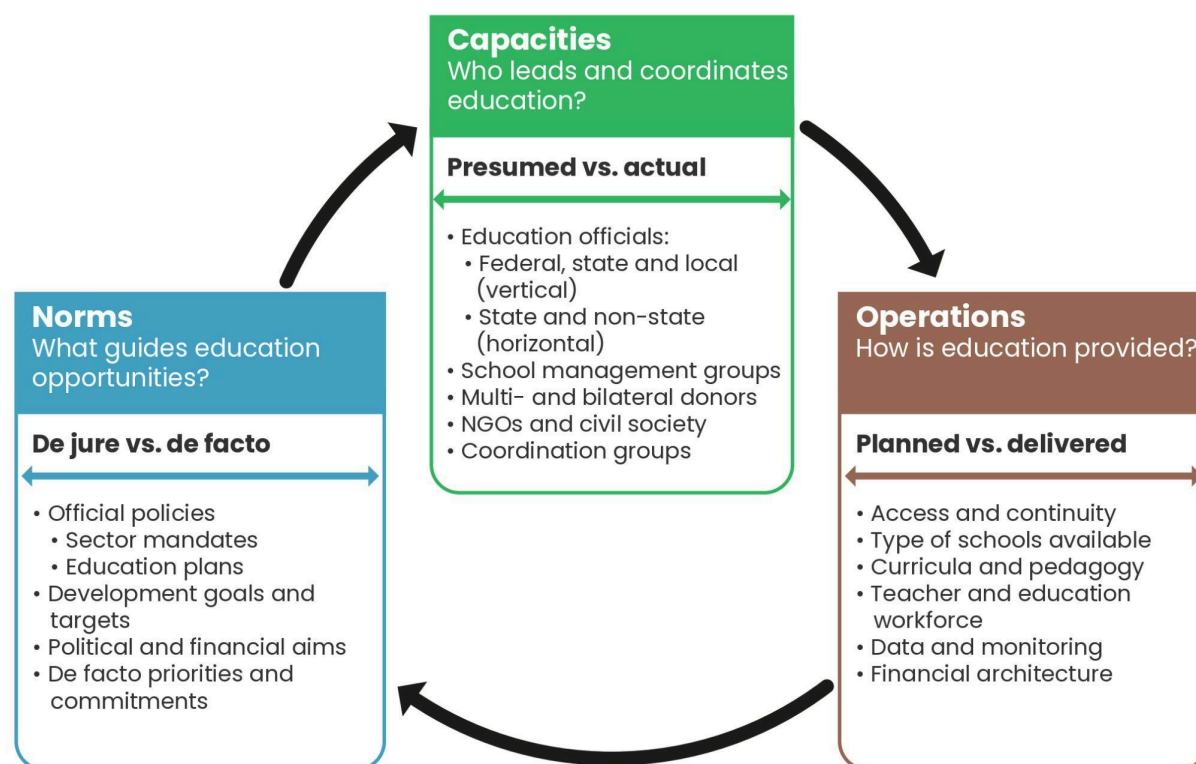
**Figure 1. Conceptual framework for education system coherence in conflict and protracted crises in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazaar**



**Our analysis focuses on the dynamic features of education coherence as negotiated across actors and looks more deeply at how both horizontal and vertical aspects of the education system align – or not – across these layers.** In this paper, we explore and highlight (mis)alignments across the dimensions of norms, capacities and operations. After beginning with contextual analysis to make it possible to better understand the current state of the education system, we analyse these three features, as first set out in Nicolai et al. (2019) and elaborated on in INEE (2021a), and Sarwar et al. 2023 (see also Figure 2):

1. **Norms:** We examine the **rules that guide educational responses** in conflict and crisis, including principles, goals, standards, mandates, strategies and expected outcomes. Here, we are interested in both formal or de jure norms (as expressed in laws, decrees and policy frameworks) and de facto norms (unwritten rules and conventions) that guide action and can be similar or different from formal norms.
2. **Capacities:** We focus on **the capabilities of those who lead and organise education** provision, including education officials, school management groups, donors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society and the coordination groups they use. Key actors' capacities are closely linked to norms since formal and informal norms play a role in determining which parts of their presumed roles actors can enact without negative sanctions.
3. **Operations:** We consider the **delivery of educational initiatives**. This covers the type of education on offer, the nature of teacher cadres and the education workforce, curricula and pedagogy, and data systems and use, as well as financing and funding. In this layer, we are interested in examining how operations at the level of delivery on the ground match or are different from the planned intervention.

**Figure 2. Dynamic features and components that influence education system coherence in conflicts and protracted crises**



Our approach to interpreting these (in)coherences is heavily informed by **political economy analysis** (PEA) thinking. PEA's focus is on systematically exploring the *underlying reality* of policy, contestation and decisions and providing insight into how formal structures, formal and informal rules, resources and power dynamics among key stakeholders shape observed outcomes (and how these are sustained or altered) (Fritz et al., 2009; Gershberg, 2021). Hence the emphasis on identifying *de jure* vs. *de facto* norms, presumed vs. actual capacities and planned vs. delivered operations, and exploring the political economy factors that might explain these differences.

This framework is used to guide our research, including data collection and analysis, in exploring education systems coherence in Cox's Bazar. As we look for (mis)alignment across the three layers, we keep in mind different forms in which these can be observed: sequencing (between short- and long-term efforts); layering (intentionally providing bespoke forms of assistance to the same groups in the same area); complementarity (deciding to work in different geographical zones); and pivoting (flexibly shifting in a crisis) (Scott et al., 2016).

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### A. Overarching research approach and questions

In this research, we use a PEA approach to understand (in)coherence in the provision of education in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Based on the conceptual framework set out above, we use the concepts of norms, capacities and operations to explore how coherent or incoherent education is in Cox's Bazar and

hypothesise how this affects education access, quality and continuity. The primary strength of this approach lies in its ability to provide insight into how system structures, formal and informal rules, resources and power dynamics among key stakeholders shape the practical landscape of policy solutions.

The central research question and sub-questions are as follows:

What shapes the education system (in)coherence in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh?

- What formal and informal rules guide education provision by the government and the humanitarian and development sectors for Rohingya and host community education?
- What are the differences between the presumed versus the actual capacities of those who lead and organise education provision to promote access, quality and continuity?
- What educational initiatives are being planned, funded, managed and evaluated by different actors?
- To what degree do these norms, capacities and operations promote or detract from access, quality and continuity of education for crisis-affected learners?

## B. Data collection and analysis

As part of the literature review, we considered approximately 130 sources of secondary data. The literature review was iterative with the analysis of International Rescue Committee (IRC) Bangladesh Country Scan interview data and the collection of additional PEA interviews by ODI (see below). Relevant literature was identified through various sources, including Oxford Libraries Online Search engine, Google Scholar, Bangladesh government and ministry websites and the websites of key donor partners (e.g. the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund – UNICEF, the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development – USAID, Education Cannot Wait – ECW, etc.). As part of the literature review, we compiled information about:

- Reports on the drivers and nature of the Rohingya persecution in Myanmar;
- Policies and mandates that have shaped quality of life for Rohingya in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh and Rakhine state, Myanmar, since early 2010;
- Joint Response Strategies for Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar;
- Joint Needs Assessments of Rohingya and host communities;
- Analytical reports about barriers to education, education-specific project plans and evaluation reports;
- Meeting notes from regional coordination groups (Education Sector and Inter Sector Coordination Group – ISCG);
- Donor and government press releases about Rohingya policies since 2017 as well as local and international news articles;
- Scholarly publications on national education system politics, planning, financing and reform;
- Datasets on enrolment and learning outcomes among Rohingya and host communities.

The research also draws on primary data gathered by IRC Bangladesh for the ERICC Bangladesh Country Scan and ODI global data gathered specifically for this PEA. The ERICC Bangladesh Country Scan is a product separate from this PEA study, with research instruments that included questions relevant to PEA (see Annex 1 topic guide, Section 3). Ethics approval for the secondary use of IRC Country Scan data and additional ODI data was obtained from the ODI Internal Review Board (Approval No. RO230013; see Annex 4).

For the Country Scan, IRC Bangladesh held 35 key informant interviews (KIIs) in Teknaf and Ukhiya,<sup>4</sup> Cox's Bazar between August 2022 and January 2023. These were held with 10 government stakeholders, 10

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<sup>4</sup> Ukhiya and Teknaf are the two *upazilas* in Cox's Bazar where most Rohingya refugees reside.

NGO/international NGO (INGO) staff, 3 informants from the humanitarian Education Sector and ISCG, 2 donors, 1 researcher, 1 journalist, 1 social activist, 2 learning facilitators, 2 government school headteacher, 2 Madrasa teachers and 2 parents (see Annex 2 for further details on the sample). The majority of interviews took place in person, and 23 out of 35 interviews were audio recorded. The interviews were conducted in English and Bangla. Summaries in the English language were provided to ODI.

The ODI research team conducted three additional interviews with key stakeholders in Cox's Bazar focusing specifically on horizontal and vertical education system coherence (see Annex 3 for a PEA-focused KII topic guide). All interviews were conducted over MS Teams. Interviews were coded in Excel against the ERICC Conceptual Framework, which focuses on access, continuity and quality of education (Kim et al., 2022), and the conceptual framework of education system coherence developed above, which focuses on norms, capacities and operations of the education in emergencies system.

The themes emerging from the interviews were used to triangulate the results from the literature review as well as to guide deeper exploration in certain parts of the literature.

## IV. FINDINGS

### A. Context

A range of contextual aspects shape the education system and opportunities within Bangladesh, and Cox's Bazar in particular. This section summarises elements of the context critical to understanding existing (in)coherence and how it may affect access, quality, and continuity of education.

#### 1. The Rohingya displacement within the Bangladesh political settlement

Bangladesh's political settlement has been characterised as a 'competitive clientelist' settlement (Hossain et al., 2017): parties compete in elections on the expectation that they will distribute patronage and benefits to their supporters if they win. Alongside these competitive elections, a shared commitment among political elites to pro-business and pro-growth policies has been maintained, which prioritises stability (Dercon, 2022). For the political elite, the rapid influx of Rohingya threatens this stability. Despite Rohingya intermittently seeking refuge in Bangladesh for the past four decades, the sheer scale and speed of the 2017 displacement caught the Government of Bangladesh off-guard (Hossain et al., 2022).

This threat is amplified by the location of the displacement – into one of Bangladesh's most deprived and environmentally fragile districts, Cox's Bazar (ECW, 2021). Influentially, given the key role of elections in the competitive clientelist political settlement, Cox's Bazar is an important constituency for general elections. It has traditionally been an area of strong opposition to the Awami League and, during the 2018 elections, there was a perception that 'whichever party wins this [Cox's Bazar] seat, gets to form the government' (Aziz, 2018). The government's response was thus shaped by the displacement coinciding with the lead-up to these 2018 elections (see further discussion in the Norms section).

To contain the crisis and mitigate the risk of escalation, the Government of Bangladesh does not officially recognise Rohingya who arrived after 2017 as 'refugees' (Hargrave et al., 2020) and insists on their repatriation to Myanmar. As of 2023, 978,000 Rohingya residing in Cox's Bazar are deprived of access to legal work opportunities, formal education, public services and freedom of movement, leaving 95% of them dependent on humanitarian assistance for their basic needs (ISCG, 2023).

#### 2. The state of education in Cox's Bazar

The Rohingya refugees face enduring structural exclusion from accessing quality education. In Rakhine state, Myanmar, Rohingya were formally and informally denied access to education (Rahman et al., 2022). Nearly half of the Rohingya children who have arrived in Bangladesh never had the opportunity to engage in formal school before displacement (Guglielmi et al., 2020a, 2020b). Schools available for Rohingya children in Rakhine state were typically understaffed and under-resourced. As of 2017, 73% of Rohingya in Rakhine state self-identified as illiterate (BROUK, 2018). In Bangladesh, until recently,<sup>5</sup> Rohingya had access to only the first two years of basic education through unaccredited non-formal learning centres. There are approximately 5,000 non-formal learning centres in Cox's Bazar operated by (i)NGOs with the support of humanitarian funding (Siegfried, 2022).

Lack of quality standards and resource constraints mean the quality of this education varies greatly (de Reynal et al., 2020; Katende et al., 2020). Constraints include frequent changes in curriculum as well as a lack of multiyear funding, school materials, suitable school structures and qualified teachers who speak Myanmar language or Arakani and Chittagonian dialects. In addition, Rohingya face restrictions on freedom of movement, the right to work and access to the internet and mobile devices (Hargrave et al., 2020). Uncertainty about the future, lack of opportunities for secure livelihoods and overlapping traumatic experiences all contribute to the ill-being of children in Cox's Bazar camps. Half (47%) of Rohingya children enrolled in non-formal education report depressive symptoms. About a quarter report experiencing anxiety (29%) and grief (27%) regularly (Borja et al., 2019; Raza et al., 2021).

This combination of factors means learning outcomes for Rohingya refugees are dire, including in comparison with those for local host communities. A recent baseline learning survey found 78% of Rohingya children aged 6–12 who received teaching instruction in English<sup>6</sup> were non-readers (Diazgranados et al., 2022). Among those who can read, nearly all (96.9%) do not understand what they are reading. As for maths, three-quarters (73%) are unable to solve a single-digit subtraction (ibid.). Only 23% of Rohingya adults report being able to read (World Bank, 2019). Learning outcomes for the host community are among the lowest in the country<sup>7</sup> but are still better than the situation facing Rohingya refugees. Based on the 2017 National Student Assessment (NSA), the majority of the host student population have basic reading and writing proficiency.

**Table 1. Host community learning outcomes in 2017<sup>8</sup> based on NSA survey results<sup>9</sup>**

	Bangla Grade 3	Bangla Grade 5	Maths Grade 3	Maths Grade 5
Cox's Bazar	232	252	218	227

<sup>5</sup> Since the 2020 rollout of the Myanmar Curriculum, access has been rapidly expanding. As of 2023, there is provision of education for Grades 1 through 10. Similarly, as of 2020, only half of Rohingya children access education through non-formal learning centres (Guglielmi et al. 2020, 2020b). As of 2023, the number of OOSC aged 3–14 reduced to about 16% (Hossain, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> The Learning Competency Framework and Approach (LCFA) learning materials available in camps are in either English or Burmese. Learning facilitators also commonly use Arakani and Chittagonian, which are about 70% similar in spoken form, to assist learners (Diazgranados et al., 2022).

<sup>7</sup> The diversity of languages and non-Bangla dialects within Cox's Bazar host communities creates significant challenges for teachers delivering a Bangla curriculum, which contributes to lower learning outcomes as against the country as a whole.

<sup>8</sup> Data on host community learning after 2017 were not publicly accessible online at the time of writing.

<sup>9</sup> The test score scale is 100–500, with the following cut-off points: below basic (100–199), basic (200–299), proficient (300–399), advanced (400–500). At basic maths level, children are able to solve one-step problems involving multiplication, subtraction and division; identify fractions and different geometrical shapes; and know the units of length. At basic level of reading, children can read short easy sentences, with some hesitation and error, and understand some of the main ideas and secondary ideas of the text that they are reading (MPME, 2017).

National average	280	281	268	267
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The government's permitting the humanitarian sector to use the Myanmar curriculum in camps has been one of the biggest policy changes in Cox's Bazar education policy since 2019. However, the prospects of Rohingya livelihoods improving remain bleak. Four years since this decision, the transition to a formal curriculum is still in its infancy; constraints have related to the transition from *ad hoc* emergency to multiyear development funding, extensive school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic, a shortage of Myanmar language skills among teachers and students and tight regulation of the Rohingya people (see Norms section). From the government's perspective, the key objective of the curriculum rollout is to remind Rohingya that 'they belong to Myanmar where they will go back someday' (Taipei Times, 2022). Based on the premise of severe overcrowding in the camps<sup>10</sup> and lack of opportunity to repatriate Rohingya to Myanmar, however, the Government of Bangladesh is going through with its long-term plan of relocating Rohingya to the remote silt island of Bhasan Char (Idris, 2017). The island erupted from underwater only in the 2000s and is still lacking basic infrastructure and work opportunities. It is also prone to cyclones and floods. Rohingya children have described it as a 'jail in the middle of the sea' (HRW, 2020). So far, about 30,000 people have moved to Bhasan Char. The Government of Bangladesh is aiming to relocate around 100,000 Rohingya refugees by the end of 2023 (UN, 2021). Movement between the mainland and the island is heavily regulated (HRW, 2021), limiting people's prospects of returning to Cox's Bazar.

## B. Norms: formal and informal rules of education provision

This section explores formal and informal rules that guide the education response to the Rohingya crisis in Cox's Bazar. Formal norms refer to the official goals, standards, mandates and strategies<sup>11</sup> expressed in education policy frameworks of government, humanitarian and development actors. Informal norms are the 'rules of the game,' usually not formalised in policy frameworks but nonetheless influential in shaping education provision in practice. These are identified through triangulating the frameworks with the interview findings as well as the academic and grey literature.

### 1. Rohingya refugees

Throughout the crisis, the Government of Bangladesh has consistently held a firm position regarding the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar alongside its efforts to relocate refugees to Bhasan Char Island. This focus on repatriation has heavily influenced the response, to prioritise short-term humanitarian assistance and constrain the scope for long-term development strategies. In the 2020 Joint Response Plan, the government stated that 'We are still working in an emergency' and that the UN would continue to help Bangladesh create an 'environment conducive for voluntary, dignified, safe and sustainable repatriation' to Myanmar (ISCG, 2020a, p. 14).

Regional politics play an important role in shaping the government's position on integration, and thus education, as well as a raft of other policies. With regard to regional dynamics, creating welcoming conditions is seen as an incentive for India's Assam state, which is to the northeast of Bangladesh, to follow

<sup>10</sup> There are only two official refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, in Teknaf and Ukhiya *upazilas*. Nearly half of the Rohingya are settled in overcrowded, unregistered, makeshift Kutupalong mega-refugee camp in Cox's Bazar (Rahman et al., 2022).

<sup>11</sup> The analysis of norms presented below is based on a review of key regional response strategies, including:

- 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 Joint Response Plans: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, Bangladesh
- 2018 Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar agreement on Rohingya repatriation
- 2019 Government of Bangladesh Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology in Education in Bangladesh
- 2020 Education Sector in Cox's Bazar – Multi-Year Strategy
- 2019, 2021 Joint Multi-Sector Needs Assessment: Bangladesh Rohingya Refugees; Host Community
- 2021–2021 Education Sector Advocacy Strategy, Cox's Bazar
- 2022–2024 ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme
- 2020 Covid-19 Response Plan: Addendum to the Joint Response Plan 2020: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis
- 2022–2031 Bangladesh National Blended Education Master Plan



Myanmar's suit and displace Rohingya (Idris, 2017). In 2017, India's Ministry of Home Affairs directed state governments to identify and deport Rohingya refugees, calling them 'illegal immigrants' under the premise that they pose a security threat (Rahman, 2017). More welcoming policies could also incentivise more Rohingya to cross from Myanmar. Another dimension in the international dynamics is the Global North–Global South divide. Officials also repeatedly invoke public feelings of resentment towards the Global North, arguing that the financial burden of taking care of Rohingya should be on wealthy countries rather than resource-poor Bangladesh. They have also argued that there is a double standard of pressuring Bangladesh to take in refugees while the Global North countries are refusing to take in refugees themselves (Hargrave et al., 2020). As one interviewee expressed, *'The international community can take some of the refugees to their countries and arrange high-quality education for them there. Why here?'*

Domestic politics also influences this narrative of repatriation, which is central to shaping access and quality of education as the new formal curriculum aims to prepare children to eventually reintegrate into Myanmar society. In terms of local politics, as discussed above, Cox's Bazar has traditionally been an area of strong opposition to the Awami League and is an important electoral constituency. As such, the influx of refugees coinciding with the 2018 general elections, and the government's aim to consolidate power (Lewis, 2019; Lewis and Hossain, 2022), created tensions. On the one hand, accepting refugees boosted the Awami League's image of being a generous party that takes care of the vulnerable and builds strong international relations. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was even referred to as the 'mother of humanity' and a 'champion for human rights' during the first years of the crisis (Lewis, 2019). On the other hand, the Awami League had to show that future economic development plans would include the needs of the local people in Cox's Bazar, which historically had not been prioritised by the government (Hargrave et al., 2020). Throughout the crisis, the government has emphasised the damage Rohingya bring to Cox's Bazar's natural resources, which were previously used to enable local tourism and micro business. Given this political context, the integration of 1.2 million Rohingya throughout Cox's Bazar and wider Bangladesh has never been an acceptable option for the Bangladesh political elite. The Capacities and Operations sections discuss further how this approach shapes access and quality of education.

International actors, in retrospect, had a narrow interpretation of the pressures facing the government and the host community and how these would affect the Education Sector. The World Bank and UNHCR have both lobbied for refugee integration in the belief that financial incentives would over time change the government's position (Najmus Sakib, 2021; UNB, 2021; Education Sector, 2020). Much focus has been on financial pressures while environmental, regional and local political factors have been overlooked (Hargrave et al., 2020). Government officials interviewed for this research emphasised that international education efforts should do more to be consistent with the government's policy of repatriation (e.g. emphasising Burmese identity, providing skills for the labour market in Myanmar) and ensuring *'that the host education does not become the casualty.'* One official described how the government doubted the international community's willingness to provide long-term support to education in Cox's Bazar (in other words showed a belief in development–humanitarian incoherence) and said this influenced the emphasis on repatriation: *'Do you think donors will continue funding? They already started cutting funding. Can our government bear this burden? We are giving [as] much support that we can.'*

Policies related to Rohingya communities focus on exclusion and the prevention of social integration, as well as exhibiting control over the crisis regardless of the short- and long-term well-being of people in the camps, including the quality of their education. This predisposition is reflected in the framing of the 2023 Joint Response Plan: 'The Government of Bangladesh, through its representatives, has the prerogative to have unfettered access anytime to any place, premise, or project, temporarily occupied by or designated for the Rohingya refugees/FDMNs at any circumstances' (ISCG, 2023, p. 3). The outwardly anti-assimilation position is reflected in a long menu of restrictive policies, including:

- Prohibition of use of Bangla language and curriculum in the camps (previously Rohingya in the registered camps were using the Bangladesh curriculum up to Grade 8) (Mostafa, 2019);

- Prohibition of use of the Learning Competency Framework and Approach (LCFA)<sup>12</sup> Levels III and IV non-formal curriculum, which effectively caps Rohingya education at the level of Grade 2 of the formal school system (World Bank, 2019);
- Strict limitations on the quality of structures that can be used as temporary learning centres. Providers are limited to teaching in temporary one-room bamboo structures that are repeatedly damaged by the rain and are uncomfortable owing to the lack of ventilation, furniture and learning materials. Building of two-story or cement schools is restricted;
- Limitations and extensive delays in government approval of non-UN NGOs that want to operate in the Education Sector in Cox's Bazar (Shohel, 2020);
- Restriction on access to education and other services for those who do not hold a registration card (Sumaiya, 2021);
- Lack of permission to leave the premises of the camps enforced by the military and police guards, as well as barbed wire fencing and CCTV equipment around the camps;
- Lack of permission to work in Bangladesh, including in humanitarian 'cash for work' programmes;
- Blocking of internet and mobile networks and confiscation of phones and sim cards from refugees.

Restrictive policies have hindered a focus on the quality of education for Rohingya and made it difficult to move beyond a short-term response, with any reforms framed within the repatriation paradigm. The government's emphasis on repatriation deliberately limits the quality of education provided for Rohingya communities. One official put this explicitly: *'This is very poor-quality education, but given the reality this is fine and perhaps the right thing to do. You should not create the pull factor for more Rohingyas to cross the border and come to Bangladesh.'* Officials also noted that this was more of an issue when the quality of host community education was poor. Restrictions on formal education are thus part of a deliberate strategy to discourage integration and 'pull factors.' These include restrictions on the size and quality of formal learning centres; on the curricula allowed; and on community-led and private education. Reforms to education provision, most prominently adoption of the Myanmar curriculum, fit with the repatriation objective. The same official described the government's perspective on the use of the curriculum: *'NGOs should try to implement the Myanmar curriculum in a way that will create a sense of Burmese identity among Rohingyas. They should know Myanmar is their country and they will go back there.'*

Education has not been categorised as life-saving by either the humanitarian sector or the government, leading to a lack of focus on education quality and continuity. At the beginning of the crisis, the humanitarian sector did not see quality education as a priority, with UNICEF 'prioritizing coverage over quality in order to save lives' (UNICEF, 2018, p. 5). Furthermore, an evaluation of UNICEF humanitarian education responses highlights that coverage frequently wins in trade-off decisions between coverage and quality, 'because quality requires greater funding and resources such as trained teachers and infrastructure ... as well as government action and engagement such as allowing entry into formal education and accrediting and recognizing education and certificates' (Mostafa, 2019, p. 6). During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government of Bangladesh classified education under non-essential operations, putting a halt to improvements in education access inside camps. Restrictions on the use of mobile and internet devices further limited humanitarian efforts to expand alternative learning models during the pandemic, including home-based caregiver-led education and distance learning (World Bank, 2019).

Rohingya communities lack meaningful inclusion in the education decision-making of both the government and international actors. This leads to vertical incoherence by generating decisions that are misaligned with Rohingya preferences or abilities. The literature highlights an almost complete absence of Rohingya voices in humanitarian decision-making spaces, with some actors exhibiting paternalistic attitudes toward Rohingya (Lough et al., 2021). This trend is reflected in humanitarian education planning, where Rohingya

<sup>12</sup> The LCFA was developed by UNICEF based on consultations with key local stakeholders, including BRAC, and beneficiary groups. LCFA development further involved a review of the Bangladesh and Myanmar curricula. UNICEF kept the government informed on curriculum developments throughout the process (Shohel, 2020). The LCFA was submitted for government approval in 2018 and approved in 2019 (Magee et al., 2020).



communities were not taken as a starting point in building programmes. There is some evidence that this leads to programming that underestimates the complexity around school non-attendance. For example, humanitarian sector actors often conclude that ‘sociocultural beliefs and practices’ are the main reason for low enrolment among adolescent girls ‘[as parents] report that education is not appropriate for their children’ (UNICEF, 2018, p. 8) and prevent girls from leaving the house (Education Sector, 2020b, p.52).

Humanitarian emphasis on the ‘cultural norm barriers’ to school enrolment during the early years of the response often lacked acknowledgement of unresolved traumas and thus the inclusion of therapeutic support in education programmes was not prioritised. Qualitative evidence shows a complex picture: family restrictions on adolescent girls leaving the house are not driven solely by cultural norms of purdah<sup>13</sup> – they come from a combination of cultural norms and valid safety concerns driven by intergenerational trauma of genocide, mass rape and street harassment. Most Rohingya women and girls either experienced or witnessed extreme forms of sexual and physical violence before and during their flight from Myanmar. There is substantial evidence that the Rakhine state military systematically mass raped Rohingya women to terrorise and demoralise communities (Mason and Kaye, 2017; Wheeler, 2017; Rahman et al., 2022). Now in Bangladesh camps, the collective trauma manifests in parents being scared to let girls travel alone (Gordon et al., 2018). Nearly half of girls aged 15–19 (44.3%) report feeling unsafe or very unsafe outside the house (ibid.), fearing being harassed, raped or trafficked for forced labour. According to one Rohingya parent interviewed, *‘My daughter can easily go to the homebase learning centre. But girls who must come from a long distance sometimes face bad behavior and bad words on the road.’* An evaluation of the LCFA curriculum (Shohel, 2020) concluded that a major limitation was a lack of content on post-traumatic mental well-being, child abuse and trafficking. Noteworthy positive exceptions of programmes that honour parental fears and wishes for female-led, gender-segregated and nearby learning points for adolescent girls include the IRC Pop-Up Learning programme (de Reynal et al, 2020) and community development centre girls-only learning sessions (INEE, 2021b).

## 2. Host community

Easing the pressure on the local community is the one aspect of the crisis that the government and international donors most readily agree upon, with host community education being the focus of development sector programming in Cox’s Bazar. Most policy documents and discussions on Cox’s Bazar begin by acknowledging the region’s pre-existing challenges, including low socioeconomic indicators and fragile social, economic and environmental frameworks (World Bank, 2018; ECW, 2020). This coherence in aims towards host communities has enabled the humanitarian and development sectors to work towards a nexus in coordinating funding. However, lack of clear leadership, combined with government restrictions, has limited coordination in other aspects. As of 2021, UN humanitarian funding was supporting 880,000 Rohingya refugees and 472,000 vulnerable Bangladeshis in Cox’s Bazar (UN, 2021). At the same time, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have provided grants for humanitarian needs, while bilateral donors have attempted to coordinate humanitarian and development streams of funding (Rieger, 2021; ISCG, 2020a; World Bank, 2022). Development sector programmes are usually part of broader support to the Government of Bangladesh’s nationwide efforts to improve the quality of education. The World Bank, for example, has provided support to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MPME) Primary Development Education Programme to ‘improve the quality of and enhance equitable access to education from pre-primary to grade 5’ (World Bank, 2018, p. 4). USAID and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) programmes have focused on teacher training and vocational and technical skills, respectively (see Operations section for further detail).

Host communities have mixed views on the presence of Rohingya, with the initially friendly and welcoming attitudes shifting to feelings of being disadvantaged, which in turn dampens government incentives to provide quality education to Rohingya communities. At the onset of the crisis, shared Sunni Islamic religious identity, linguistic similarities and similar physical attributes all provided vital grounds for local support for

<sup>13</sup> Purdah is a Muslim practice in which women and girls are screened from men and strangers by a veil in public or a curtain at home.

Rohingya refugees in need. Host community members often provided food and shelter and helped Rohingya navigate the local social system. Empathy for refugee situations was also driven by Bangladeshis' own experience of displacement: during the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war, almost 10 million Bangladeshis fled to India as a result of violence inflicted by the Pakistani armed forces (Ansar and Khaled, 2021). However, over time the empathy has been overpowered by resentment as a result of a 14% drop in wages, congestion and a doubling of local transport costs, a drop in tourism turnout and restrictions on fishing and small-scale agricultural production, which have all contributed to an increase in local poverty levels (Rahman et al., 2022). Furthermore, there is growing resentment about INGOs hiring people from other parts of Bangladesh over Cox's Bazar locals (Maruf, 2018).

### C. Capacities: leadership and coordination of the Education Sector

This section focuses on those who lead and organise education provision, including humanitarian Education Sector coordination groups, national education agencies, humanitarian and development donors, bilateral donors, (I)NGOs, civil society, informal tutors and providers of religious education.

The political executive is the most influential actor in the coordination of efforts for Rohingya and host communities, including for education, and has an extensive influence in camps through the network of civil administration system. In Dhaka, the response is managed by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. The efforts are coordinated through the National Task Force, which is led by the Office of Foreign Affairs. The NGO Affairs Bureau also has an important role in the response in terms of regulating and licensing NGO activities in the camps. In Cox's Bazar, the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) leads the Rohingya response in collaboration with the Deputy Commissioner's Office, which is responsible for mitigating the impact of the crisis on the host community. Each camp has a Bangladeshi official appointed by RRRC called the camp-in-charge, who oversees the Rohingya community leaders (*majhis*) (UNHCR, 2021a). Camp-in-charges communicate government regulations to the Rohingya via *majhis* and help enforce them. For example, when the government banned private tutoring in the camps, camp-in-charges were threatening to confiscate the ID cards of teachers who used their shelters for individual lessons and to send them to Bhasan Char Island (HRW, 2021). In terms of education policies for host communities, district education officers, district primary education and mass education officers and *upazila nirbahi* officers are key government sector actors (Saha et al., 2023). The District Development and Growth Plan for Cox's Bazar is the key national policy framework guiding the actions of the network of civil administrators.

However, the approach is not monolithic across different government agencies, with evidence of incoherence regarding education in Cox's Bazar. The NGO Affairs Bureau appears motivated more by enforcing strict regulations and limitations on NGO activities (following the executive anti-assimilation objectives). The Bureau treats licences granted to NGOs primarily as a humanitarian issue, issuing them on a six-month project-level basis. This reportedly hinders the ability of NGOs to coordinate humanitarian relief with longer-term education funding and programming. In contrast, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is more open to reforms to improve the quality of education. This horizontal incoherence was evident with regard to approval for play-based informal learning activities in the camps. While MoE recognised their value, there have been several instances of the NGO Affairs Bureau rejecting foreign donation applications owing to the inclusion of such education activities. To bypass this disagreement, temporary learning centres had to be relabelled 'child play areas' and teachers had to be called 'facilitators' (Shohel, 2020). It should be noted that, in general, the MoE lacks relative power within government related to education policy for Rohingya and mostly acts on the policy decisions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Leadership tensions characterised the initial humanitarian response, with implications for the coherence of education provision. Because it had a pre-existing relationship with the Government of Bangladesh and because the Government did not recognise Rohingya as refugees, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) had an atypical leadership and coordination role in the humanitarian response. This resulted

in a power struggle between IOM and UNHCR (Sida et al., 2018; van Brabant and Patel, 2018; Sida and Schenkenberg, 2019; Hargrave et al., 2020). IOM established the ISCG to improve coordination but, in the judgement of Sida and Schenkenberg (2019, p. 16), the triple lines of accountability from the ISCG (chaired by UNHCR, IOM and the UN Resident Coordinator) ‘confused, rather than clarified, accountability for the response.’ Early in the crisis, there was also competition between UNICEF and UNHCR for leadership of the Education Sector and coordination difficulties between UNICEF and Save the Children as eventual co-chairs (Ibid., 2018; Magee et al., 2020;). Although these differences have now mostly been resolved, Schenkenberg et al. (2018, p. 58) describe how they led to some ‘initial gaps and delays’ in the education response. Moreover, multiple NGOs have described how the high-level leadership disputes made their delivery work more difficult, and the competition of different camps under UNHCR or IOM control can only have contributed to challenges in coordination (Sida and Schenkenberg, 2019; Magee et al., 2020).

The sheer number of education providers operating in Cox’s Bazar created challenges of horizontal coordination and competition between NGOs, although many KIs reported that local-level horizontal expertise-sharing was one of the biggest strengths of the response. The large number of education providers (around 30)<sup>14</sup> working on education in Cox’s Bazar adds strain to coordination. At times, there have been disagreements between these providers over funding (Haq et al., 2023) and the direction of the response, for example whether to lobby for the use of the national curriculum or formalisation of the LCFA (Magee et al., 2020). However, Education Sector coordination mechanisms appear to have created incentives to coordinate, including through standardising curricula and providing opportunities for networking and training (McGee et al., 2020). One interviewee described coordination between education providers as the ‘greatest strength’ of the response. Some KIs made positive comparisons with other crisis contexts: *‘I worked in Mali and Indonesia and in their comparison, learning centres in Cox’s Bazar camps are much better organised ... Providers, donors and policy-makers are better organised here’* (KI, Humanitarian Sector Coordination Group). Interviewees also cited as a strength of the response the extent of international expertise and experience that had been mobilised.

Challenges with the breadth of coordination of the humanitarian education response are more often cited, with local NGOs struggling to have a meaningful influence. Bangladeshi NGOs have reported that their participation in donor-led coordination meetings is often tokenistic: they are invited as implementing partners but not strategic partners with real influence in the response; or language barriers prevent them from contributing (Hargrave et al., 2020). BRAC is an exception, but, as the dominant voice representing the Bangladeshi NGO communities, can cause tensions with smaller NGOs that feel crowded out (Lewis, 2019; Shohel, 2020). Magee et al. (2020) note the important role these smaller national NGOs could play, given they often hold good relationships with the government and thus are more suited to navigating the politics of education reform.

Humanitarian coordination with Rohingya community-led education initiatives was initially lacking and has since been made more challenging by government restrictions. Educated Rohingya have established numerous non-formal and informal education initiatives within Cox’s Bazar, often for those beyond the cut-off age for the learning centres (Olney et al., 2019). To access this education, parents usually pay a small fee, although there are frequently exceptions for the poorest households. Early in the response, an opportunity was missed for coherence across international actors and Rohingya initiatives. Rohingya educators reported limited, if any, support from humanitarian groups (Olney et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2022), and Olney et al.’s survey of these initiatives (2019, p. 3) describes a ‘a lack of systematic mapping and efforts by the humanitarian education sector to reach out to community educators.’ Following this report, humanitarian actors agreed with the government to pilot support to these schools but this was paused by the pandemic (HRW, 2022; Rahman et al., 2022). Since then, the government stance towards Rohingya-led education has hardened, especially towards informal tutoring from family shelters and through the Madrasa system. In December 2021, the government prohibited community-led schools and private informal tutoring

<sup>14</sup> The estimate of education implementing partners varies between 21 (ISCG, 2023) and 31 (Hasan et al., 2022). The number has also fluctuated between years based on Joint Response Plans.

by Rohingya educators (as well as home-based learning centres run by humanitarian groups), emphasising the informal nature of these arrangements and supposed security concerns (Foyez and Rahman, 2022). As it stands, the opportunity for improved coherence between humanitarian and community-led education does not look promising. International rights groups have campaigned against the restrictions on Rohingya-led teaching and learning but it is unclear how firmly development and humanitarian actors are lobbying behind the scenes with the government (Amnesty International, 2022).

Coordination with Rohingya Madrasa education is another missed opportunity for improved coherence; however, it is unclear to what extent the Bangladesh NGO Affairs Bureau finds this permissible. Multiple interviewees raised the prospect of improved NGO coordination with Madrasas, recognising that in practice this is where many access education within the camps, especially older age groups. Early education needs assessments showed that close to 80% of children age 6 to 14 attended Madrasas since arrival (Education Sector, 2018, p. 6). In the first years of the crisis, informal Rohingya tutors collaborated with Madrasas to use their premises to provide lessons (Olney et al., 2019). It is unclear how the government regulation regarding non-formal schooling would apply to NGO-Madrasa coordination. One official, a camp-in-charge, recommended that, *'There could be an exchange of resources between Madrasa education and [NGO] learning centres. Learning centres have space issues; they can use Madrasa space.'* However, other interviewees explained how (I)NGOs' caution around collaboration with Madrasas stemmed from perceived government discouragement:

*Bangladesh had some experience of terrorism in the name of religion, there have been incidents in the last 10–15 years. So the government ... so it is not a direct ban. It is a kind of indirect discouragement not to promote this kind of education. Because if it is done, then there is a belief that these people may be going in the wrong direction. [The government] did not directly declare it, but indirectly ... and the NGOs working here didn't want to go on any confrontation with the government, they understand government's signal and did not promote this Madrasa education. That is why it is not flourishing (KII with NGO staff member).*

The ability and appetite of community actors (employers, parents, teachers) to demand quality education for both host and refugee communities is limited. Bangladesh is a large-scale, low-skilled labour economy that relies heavily on the garment industry. Large employers, many of them members of parliament, do not view quality of schooling as a matter of concern (Hossain et al., 2019; Dercon, 2022). General political will to improve the quality of education plateaued with the achievement of near-universal education by the early 2000s, way before the rapid influx of refugees in 2017. For local parents, ability to speak up is limited by structured patronage relationships between local elites and government administrators (Ansar and Khaled, 2021) as the Awami League has effectively secured control of civil society groups, including Local School Committees (Lewis and Hossain, 2022). Rohingya attempts to voice their needs through peaceful protests have not led to policy change as they have no bargaining power. In 2017, 200,000 Rohingya protested in camps about the denial of access to sim cards and the internet (Education Sector, 2020) but the limitations on internet use are still in place. On the second anniversary of the Rohingya displacement refugees organised a peaceful gathering in Kutupalong camp, which resulted in largely negative attention in the national media (Al Jazeera, 2019; Petersen and Rahman, 2019). Refugee civil society has similarly struggled to find entry points to engage with the humanitarian response (Lough et al., 2021).

## D. Operations: financing and monitoring of education delivery

### 1. Financing and planning

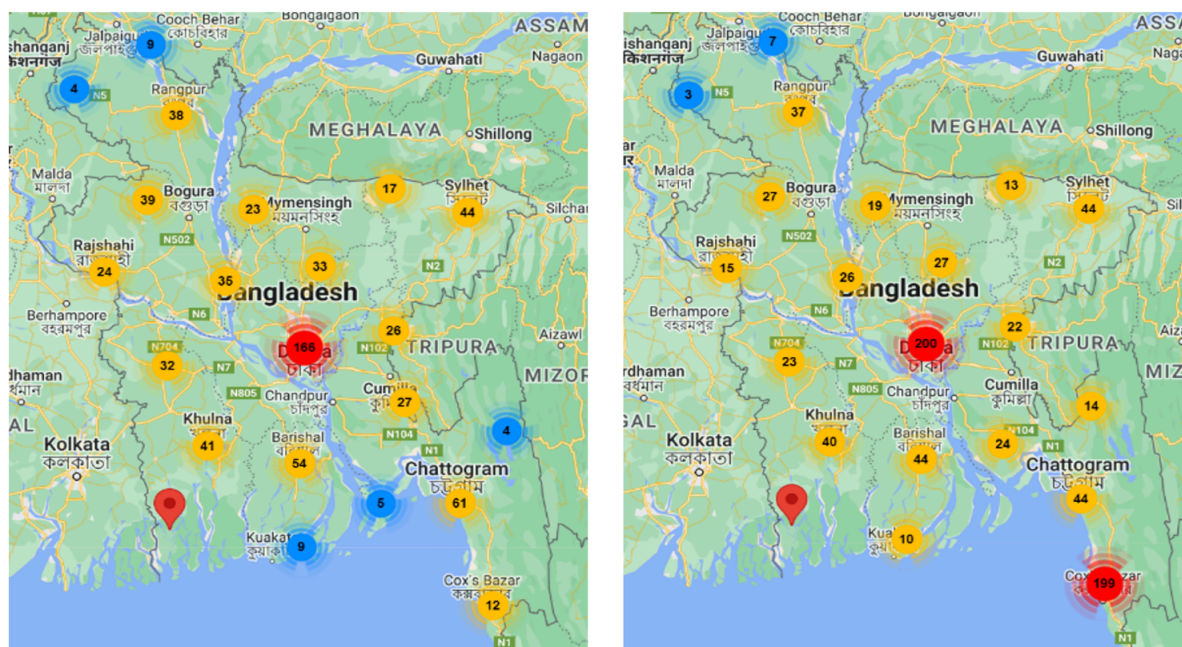
There has been a regional shift towards Cox's Bazaar in the priorities of donor-funded education efforts in Bangladesh. Based on International Aid Transparency Initiative data,<sup>15</sup> there were 12 basic education projects

<sup>15</sup> <http://d-portal.org/>



in Cox's Bazar between 2010 and 2016. The number jumped to 199 between 2017 and 2022. Meanwhile, the number of education projects in other regions has dropped. The heat map in Figure 3 illustrates this shift in attention.

**Figure 3. Heatmap of humanitarian and development education projects in Bangladesh**



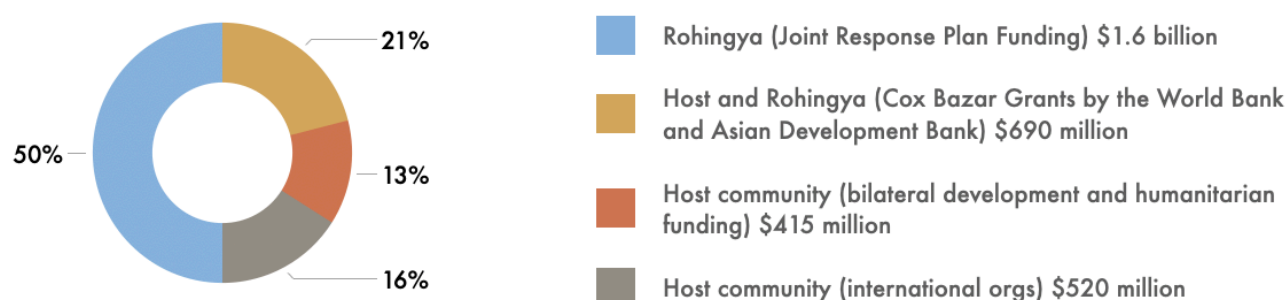
*Note: On the left are 2010–2016 basic education projects. On the right are 2017–2022 education projects. Please note that not all projects had an exact geographic location.*

Within Cox's Bazar, the humanitarian and development sectors have operationalised the humanitarian–development nexus through the layering of finances, with both Rohingya and host communities receiving funds from two sectors. The World Bank and ADB were among the first to redirect development grants to cover humanitarian needs in Bangladesh through the 2018 and 2019 *International Development Association Regional Allocations for Refugees and Host Communities*. This was the first time ADB had provided grant funding to support a displacement crisis (Rieger, 2021). The World Bank *Rohingya Emergency Project* is set to run from 2018 to 2024 (World Bank, 2022), while its *Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) II* financing is being channelled towards Rohingya refugees via disbursements to the government (Marcus et al., 2023). On the humanitarian side of financing, currently all humanitarian projects are required to dedicate 25% of their funding to host communities (per KIIs). However, enforcement and coordination of this requirement are not always optimal. Bilateral donors have also scaled up their humanitarian and development assistance to Cox's Bazar through different ministries, although this approach to finance layering has been difficult for donors without a regional presence in Cox's Bazar before 2017. It is estimated that over 70% of bilateral funds to the region are channelled outside the Joint Response Plans (ISCG, 2020a).

Based on 2020 Joint Response Plan data, cross-sectoral financial layering led to host and Rohingya communities receiving about equal amounts of funding in the first three years of the crisis<sup>16</sup> (Figure 4). ECW financial disbursement reports indicate a similar trend: the host community took in 40% of total ECW funding in Cox's Bazar as of 2022 (Marcus et al., 2023). These are conservative estimates of the host community benefits since calculations do not include national-level development programmes, such as *Reaching Out of School Children II*, flexible donor contributions and benefits from local procurement and staff employment.

<sup>16</sup> Data for after the first three years of the crises were not publicly available at the time of writing.

**Figure 4. Estimates of International Aid to Cox's Host and Rohingya Communities for 2017–2019<sup>17</sup>**



*Note: Estimates are adapted from the 2020 Joint Response Plan (ISCG, 2020, pp. 32–33). Similar data are not available for consecutive years. Estimates do not include national-level development programmes, flexible donor contributions and host community benefits from local procurement and staff employment.*

The World Bank and UNHCR hoped that increased financial support to the host community would give them leverage to soften the government's position on the Rohingya. Evidence suggests that joint financing would incentivise the government to grant Rohingya more rights, including access to the local social registry and social assistance systems (Education Sector, 2020; UNHCR, 2021b). The permission to include Rohingya in socioeconomic assessments by the World Bank related to the Covid-19 response was an encouraging sign to international donors (UNHCR, 2021b). Building on the momentum, the World Bank lobbied the government to abandon its plan of relocating Rohingya to Bhasan Char Island. In a bid to promote integration, the World Bank pledged a substantial sum, of \$2 billion, to offset the financial burden. Humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, similarly attempted to advocate for integration (Brugha et al., 2021; Education Sector, 2022b). The attempts failed: the government pushed back against the suggestion in the media (Najmus Sakib, 2021; UNB, 2021) and continued to relocate people to Bhasan Char Island. As such, questions on the effectiveness of development funds for leveraging the humanitarian response remain. For example, some of Hargrave et al.'s (2020) informants argued that 'development partners, particularly the World Bank and their funding to Bangladesh, may have helped facilitate discussions on education, although others were more critical in terms of whether enough had been done to leverage the World Bank funding to support an opening of the policy environment for refugees in this and other areas' (p. 30).

It is apparent that the annual Joint Response Plans have not enhanced coherence between the humanitarian and the development sectors. The Joint Response Plans are the key coordination frameworks between the government and the humanitarian sector. The first few highlighted needs and practical steps towards achieving a development–humanitarian nexus but this disappeared from later iterations, potentially because of a decline in bilateral donor support and a deteriorating relationship between the US (the largest donor) and Bangladesh. Internal meeting notes from the humanitarian coordination meetings suggest available funding and political dynamics shape joint targets and framing, not the other way around (Education Sector, 2022a). For the US, restoring democracy in Myanmar and repatriation of Rohingya currently supersede resolving the plight of the Rohingya in Bangladesh (Rasid, 2023). Furthermore, the Government of Bangladesh has condemned US sanctions on Russia following the Russia–Ukraine War, further damaging the bilateral relationship (Ahasan, 2022; Chowdhury, 2023). Japan, the second largest bilateral donor, has been shifting its focus to Bhasan Char Island, and the UK, the third largest, has reduced its commitment to Rohingya issues significantly since 2020 owing to development funding cuts (Curtis et al., 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Estimates adapted from 2020 Joint Response Plan (JRP, 2020, pp.32–33). Similar data are not available for consecutive years. 2017–2019 estimates do not include national-level development programmes, flexible donor contributions, and host community benefits from local procurement and staff employment.

Education funding per Rohingya child has decreased since the Covid-19 pandemic despite the increase in need for education support. The pandemic created a two-year disruption in schooling in Cox's Bazar, which led most children to stay in the same grade for three to four years (Diazgranados et al., 2022). At the same time as education support needs increased, global funding commitments to Cox's Bazar decreased. In the case of the US, between 2017 and 2020 the government steadily gave more money every year, peaking at \$313.8 million in 2020. This dropped to \$298.6 million in 2021 and to \$129 million in 2022 (OCHA, 2023<sup>18</sup>). One donor representative explained that the reduction in support stemmed from a lack of opportunities to make a substantial difference in Cox's Bazar due to government restrictions: '*[Why should we] focus on Bangladesh where there is very little chance to get anything done?*' (Hargrave et al., 2020, p. 20). The decline in overall support has inevitably limited per child education support (see Table 2) and will impair the Education Sector's ability to effectively operationalise the Myanmar curriculum.

**Table 2. Education Sector funding targets**

Year	Total humanitarian funding	Education Sector funding	Rohingya population targeted	Amount per person targeted
2019	\$920 million	\$59 million	462,370	\$128
2020	\$877 million	\$69 million	421,771	\$164
2021	\$943 million	\$85 million	451,548	\$188
2022	\$881 million	\$70 million	469,882	\$149
2023	\$876 million	\$71 million	457,686	\$155

*Figures compiled by the authors from the 2019–2023 Joint Response Plan reports.*

Furthermore, there has been a decline in support to other essential elements of Rohingya child well-being, most crucially food security. Adequate nutrition directly affects children's cognitive development, concentration and ability to learn. Most recently, the World Food Programme has reduced funding for Cox's Bazar from \$12 to \$8 per child per month (Pirovolakis, 2023). Advocates are concerned that a drastic reduction in available food will push the communities into a hunger crisis, as even a \$12/child allocation will barely cover the minimum caloric intake (Ganguly, 2023). The reduction has been justified by arguments that Rohingya people should have the opportunity to work and access education instead (Islam, 2023). This logic stands at odds with the political environment, in which prospects of work permits are extremely limited, with all Rohingya individuals who arrived after 2017 reliant on food assistance. There is no discussion on how this reduction will affect the long-term development and learning of Rohingya children.

The protracted nature of the crisis calls for more predictable funding for Rohingya education, but the short-term nature of the humanitarian approach, combined with the government's emphasis on repatriation, makes this extremely challenging. Funding typically lasts less than a year, forcing children to drop out of school when funding ends, and teachers find alternative employment. The expansion of the Myanmar curriculum is unlikely to succeed without multiyear funding (Katende et al., 2020). One education implementing partner summarised in a KII: 'It is hard to plan for quality education ... Here, we plan everything short term, for one year to be more specific. We started this intervention hoping Rohingyas will go back.

<sup>18</sup> OCHA finance data is available here: <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1023/flows>

However, the protracted nature of the crisis now forcing us to think long-term grade-wise education. This changes everything.’

## 2. Data systems and learning quality

There are currently no published data that allow us to compare and track learning outcomes and teacher quality across the 31<sup>19</sup> non-formal learning providers in Cox’s Bazar. According to KIIs, UNICEF has conducted three rounds of assessments: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) placement tests in 2018 and two learner assessments (in 2019 and 2023). The last round is said to have covered 70,000+ children in and out of schools. Unfortunately these data are not publicly available or exchanged between humanitarian agencies, owing to political sensitivities. Stand-alone learning assessments show that reading and writing skills remain low (Diazgranados et al., 2022; Haq et al., 2023).<sup>20</sup> The literature suggests that UNICEF designed the assessment to facilitate grade transition and the transfer of students into accelerated learning programmes. However, only about a quarter of primary education programmes are able to conduct this assessment, because of a lack of technical expertise (Haq et al., 2023). Data on mental well-being are included in the ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme framework on learning outcomes monitoring but are also not publicly available (KIIs). This points to a likelihood of horizontal incoherence in provider quality.

Joint Needs Assessments and the Cox’s Bazar Panel Surveys, drawing their sample from the UNHCR official registry of refugee IDs, are the two key data sources that give an overview of school enrolment across campsites. The Education Sector also collects administrative and demographic data from each NGO and INGO operating in the area and then aggregates these data for RRRC and donors. These data are used to make decisions about funding allocations. The data show the number of students in each grade, teacher and student attendance and distribution of books and learning materials (Katende et al., 2020; Diazgranados et al., 2022).

A restrictive policy context and humanitarian–government normative frameworks in which education is not seen as life-saving inevitably undermine the quality of day-to-day education delivery. Mandates whereby learning centres have to be temporary bamboo structures sometimes translate into uncomfortable learning environments, given the lack of proper furniture and ventilation. The six-month limit on NGO Affair Bureau project approvals creates difficulties in retaining teaching staff during the approval waiting period (Education Sector, 2020; Katende et al., 2020). Similarly, the restriction on teacher pay in camps incentivises highly skilled Bangladeshi teachers to work predominantly in the host community, where they can receive higher compensation: ‘For teachers in camps it is strictly maintained that they get no more than 15,000 taka. Teachers working in the host community get 20,000–25,000 taka and have other sources of income such as private tuition. [For Rohingya] we only get teachers who are struggling to maintain a job [in the host community]’ (KII with NGO staff in Cox’s Bazar). A shortage of qualified teachers results in high teacher–student ratios in some of the camps (ISCG, 2019a; ISCG, 2022). In this context, the focus of the humanitarian sector for the past couple of years has been primarily on ensuring access to education, particularly for adolescent girls,<sup>21</sup> with the quality aspect considered a secondary priority (Education Sector, 2020, p. 22).

<sup>19</sup> Education implementing partner estimates vary between 21 (ISCG, 2023) and 31 (Hasan et al., 2023), speaking to the difficulty of coordinating and overseeing a large number of actors on the ground.

<sup>20</sup> In 2018, Room to Read conducted a learning assessment with nearly 180,000 children showing that 22% had ASER Level 2 knowledge of Burmese, English and maths (can recognise words and numbers from 0 to 99). Less than 1% had Level 3 knowledge (able to read a paragraph and multiply numbers) and no one had Level 4 skills (respond to reading comprehension questions). (Diazgranados et al., 2022)

<sup>21</sup> According to the 2019 Joint Needs Assessment, 75% of Rohingya children aged 6–14 are enrolled in school. However, only 3% of adolescent girls and 10% of adolescent boys aged 15–18 are enrolled in any form of schooling. In comparison, enrolment rates in the host community are considerably higher, reaching 84% for boys and 79% for girls, with minimal gender differences (World Bank, 2019). Based on these figures, the expansion of access to education for Rohingya has been the priority on the Education Sector agenda for the past couple of years (ISCG, 2019b).



Frequent changes in curriculums and lack of certification are key barriers to improving quality. Between 2007 and 2017, Bangladesh, with the assistance of UNHCR, offered a non-formal Bangla version of the national school curriculum in the refugee camps up to Grade 8. However, even during that period, Rohingya children were not permitted to access public examinations and schools outside of the camps (HRW, 2019).

Between 2017 and 2021, teaching the Bangladesh curriculum was forbidden, forcing the learning centres to offer simple education that clustered children by age and eventually by the level of competence following the English and Burmese-based LCFA. The change was driven by government fears of the political and economic costs of integrating over 700,000 Rohingya into communities that historically have been less supportive of the Awami League than other regions (see Norms section). There was no distribution of Level 1 and 2 learning materials during the first three years of the crisis (Katende et al., 2020). There was also no agreed approach on delivering basic teacher training and ensuring quality control, with students reporting teacher absenteeism and physical punishment (ECW, 2021). The LCFA remained unaccredited owing to prolonged delays in the official approval process (NGOs were allowed to use only the Level 1 and 2 curricula). Most parents (87%) categorised LCFA education as bad or very bad and said they preferred sending their children to private tutors: 'The teachers who are hired in [non-formal schools] are not graduates of class 10. They are not qualified enough to teach children, so children are not learning' (ISCG, 2021d, p. 39). In retrospect, the pragmatic shift to the LCFA non-formal curriculum in 2017 legitimised the provision of refugee education through a completely separate education system (Brugha et al., 2021).

The shift to the Myanmar curriculum started in 2021, following government approval in 2020. The Education Sector lobbied for the transition from the LCFA because:

- Government restrictions limited the LCFA-based curriculum to Levels 1 and 2.
- Rohingya in newer (post-2017) camps wanted access to 'formal' (even if uncertified) curriculum with clear subjects, grades and a pathway to secondary education.
- Piloting the Myanmar curriculum was not dependent on the approval of the Bangladesh and Myanmar governments.
- The Myanmar curriculum allows for the teaching of different subjects.
- Adoption of the Myanmar curriculum aligns with the ruling party's non-negotiable paradigm on repatriation (e.g. the Myanmar curriculum will help Rohingya meet the citizenship criteria of fluency in the Myanmar language).
- About a quarter of Rohingya used the Myanmar curriculum before displacement as 23% of Rohingya adults reported being able to read (World Bank, 2019).<sup>22</sup>

The Myanmar curriculum faces the same barriers to improving quality as the LCFA curriculum. Language of instruction was one of the key limitations of the LCFA curriculum, as most Rohingya do not speak English or Burmese. The language barrier issue remains unaddressed as the Myanmar curriculum must be administered in Burmese. Formal accreditation of the Myanmar curriculum by the Myanmar and Bangladesh governments is still pending, while learning assessments are *ad hoc* and dependent on NGO initiatives. Very few teachers are female, which discourages adolescent girls from attending school (Katende et al., 2020 Shohel, 2020). Consequently, parental views on the agreement to use the Myanmar curriculum are mixed. On the one hand, some see it as a positive development, given that private tutors lobbied for the right to use the Myanmar curriculum and that it may give children a chance to eventually integrate into Myanmar society:

*Our NGO is piloting the Myanmar curriculum and the community has properly accepted it. The community has raised this issue, they said they need the Myanmar curriculum and now we have Myanmar curriculum Grades 1 and 2 and also 6, 7, 8, 9 and in the upcoming year we will do Years 3 and 4 (KII with NGO staff).*

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<sup>22</sup> Although nearly half of children who arrived in Bangladesh had never engaged in formal school before their arrival (Guglielmi et al., 2020a, 2020b).

On the other hand, the low quality of teaching in informal learning centres still motivates parents to send their children to Madrasas instead:

*The Myanmar Curriculum is not [always] accepted by Rohingya people in camps ... non-qualified agencies are getting funds, which some of the time are useless (KII with INGO staff).*

*Teachers are not qualified [in learning centres]. In Madrasas all the teachers have completed their education ... We have qualified teachers for each subject [and] provide education till Grade 8 following the Myanmar curriculum and the Bangladesh Hathajari Madrasa Board curriculum. But schools have just two teachers for all the subjects (KII with Madrasa teacher).*

Overall, the rollout of the new curriculum is facing the same issues related to quality as the LCFA-based curriculum.

Meanwhile, development sector programmes for the host community focus primarily on enhancing the quality of education, widening the disparity in life chances between Rohingya and Bangladeshi children. The funding for host communities has been channelled through a government-led series of Primary Education Development Projects (PEDP3 and PEDP4), with bilateral donors fitting additional programmes into the overarching PEDP strategies.

**Figure 5. Dynamic features and components that influence education system coherence in conflicts and protracted crises**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GoB	PEDP2 (Primary Education Development Program)														
EU		Hardest-to-reach/non-formal education programme													
GoB			PEDP3												
WB			ROSC (reaching out-of-school children)												
USAID			READ (Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development)												
USAID					Early Grade Reading										
FCDO						YES4Growth									
ECW								MYRP (Multi-Year Resilience Programme)							
USAID									Esho Shikhi ('Come and Learn')						
GoB									PEDP4						
WB									Quality Learning for All Programme						
USAID										Inclusive Education (Disabilities)					

For example, the USAID Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development (READ) project funded teacher training sessions, academic supervisions, formative assessments, school-based reading corners, print-rich environments, reading festivals and community reading camps (Harris-Van Keuren and Bowden, 2016). The Come and Learn programme trained master teachers trainers (20,000 teachers from 10,000 schools) who subsequently trained other teachers and distributed high-quality learning materials (Winrock, 2023). FCDO's YES4Growth programme, which included Chittagong, funded technical skills training and job placement services for young people, with nearly half of the participants being girls (FCDO, 2021). Through development programmes, schools in Cox's Bazar receive funding for education supplies, co-curricular and sports activities, libraries and community reading promotion campaigns and grants to tackle issues identified by the school management committees<sup>23</sup> (GPE, 2018). All of these and the above-mentioned factors reinforce the notion that separate cannot be equal, as was reflected in KIIs with NGO staff in Cox's Bazar:

<sup>23</sup> Issues included quality, building gender-segregated hygiene blocks, infrastructure refurbishment, coaching and mentoring for results-based management in education, live data collection and analysis on key education indicators including attendance and dropouts and classroom-based evaluation by teachers.

*The situation here is different for the host community and Rohingya because it is a different curriculum, different school infrastructure, number of teachers and quality of education ... For the host community, most teachers have higher education from national universities. They have 14–16 years of education. The level [is just] very different (KII with NGO staff).*

## E. Evolving dynamics: education provision on Bhasan Char Island

Some key dynamics related to the coherence of education provision in the Rohingya response are beyond the scope of the review or are evolving substantially in real time, with limited information available to our research. Most notable is the ongoing plan to relocate refugees to Bhasan Char Island in the Bay of Bengal, previously a Navy base. While this paper focuses on the situation in Cox's Bazar, this section provides some initial reflections on the coherence of education provision in Bhasan Char according to the (incomplete) information available.

Most international organisations and donors seriously object to the government's plan to relocate refugees to Bhasan Char (Sanjeep Hossain and Janmyr, 2022; Kamruzzaman, 2022). There is clear incoherence in how the international community and the Government of Bangladesh view the relocation. The government and the media in Bangladesh portray Bhasan Char Island as a *chotmotkar jayga* ('excellent place'), whereas the international community warns of a 'prison island' (Sanjeep Hossain and Janmyr, 2022). Human rights groups have raised concerns about limitations to freedom of movement; reports of coercion in the relocation; repression of refugee protests on the island; vulnerability to extreme weather events; and lack of infrastructure and difficulty of access (HRW, 2021; Sanjeep Hossain and Janmyr, 2021; Islam and Siddika, 2022; Nguyen and Lewis, 2022). In contrast, the government argues that Cox's Bazar is overcrowded and the island is needed to ease pressure; that the camps are environmentally degrading Cox's Bazar; and that there are security concerns in the camps. It also emphasises the infrastructure it has constructed on the island and insists relocation is voluntary (Islam and Siddika, 2022). The government excluded the UNHCR from the initial relocation of refugees because of what it described as its 'negative campaign, unrealistic conditions and static position' (bdnews, 2020).

However, since then, UNHCR has signed a memorandum of understanding on aid provision on the island, which forms part of the joint humanitarian response. This includes 'education in the Myanmar curriculum in the Myanmar language, as well as the ability to engage in livelihoods, capacity building activities, and skills development commensurate with opportunities available in Rakhine State in Myanmar' (ISCG, 2023, p. 35). On paper, this is more than is permitted in Cox's Bazar; in practice, livelihood opportunities on a previously uninhabited island are limited. The stated priorities for education in Bhasan Char align with the overall priorities in the Rohingya humanitarian response – namely, the provision of learning opportunities through the Myanmar curriculum; a particular focus on girls' education; and capacity development of teachers and Education Sector partners (ISCG, 2023). The response aims to reach 25,505 Rohingya refugees with 7 sector projects, 7 fund-raising partners and 3 implementing partners, in contrast with 20–30 implementing partners in the Cox's Bazar education response (Haq et al., 2023; ISCG, 2023).

There is incoherence among international donors and NGOs on whether to provide humanitarian support to Bhasan Char, reflecting different views on the need to disincentivise relocation (which some are concerned is coerced) versus supporting essential services. According to The New Humanitarian, in 2022 the UK agreed to contribute funding to Bhasan Char whereas the US was more reluctant and delayed doing the same (Loy, 2022). The reservations of some donors were underpinned by technical visits to the island (Islam and Siddika, 2022; KIIs). Meanwhile, comments from BRAC Bangladesh hint at a more supportive view of the relocation among Bangladeshi NGOs. The executive director has said that the government is 'a lot more open [with regard to easing restrictions] when it comes to Bhasan Char ... There is a lot of closing down of policy negotiations exactly because of this Bhasan Char limbo. Once this gets resolved, I think we will have a lot more opening to negotiate with the Government' (Loy, 2022).

One of the appeals of relocation is the promise of improved education opportunities but there is limited information on the actual state of the education system. From the information available, it appears substantial challenges around access, quality and continuity of education remain. One report describes 4 NGOs providing education services on the island, in only 4 of 120 cluster villages (HRW, 2021). Rohingya parents talked of how promises of improved education on the island had not been met: ‘When we were in the camps [in Cox’s Bazar], the authorities promised me that my two sons can have further education if we choose Bhasan Char. But when I went to ask the NGO staff here and the Camp-in-Charge about my sons’ education, they said they don’t have any option beyond [LCFA] Level 1 and 2 on the island’ (in HRW, 2021). More up-to-date information is lacking. A 2022 report by UNHCR claims that children in kindergarten and Grades 1–3 and 6 are being taught the Myanmar curriculum, although two of our interviewees said they believed only BRAC was implementing education projects on the Island.

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper has analysed the extent to which education provision in Cox’s Bazar is coherent for improving access, quality and continuity of education. In doing so, it offers insights that can be used to design more contextually and politically nuanced interventions and research studies. The paper has been approached through a political economy lens, looking at the norms, capacities and operations of different groups of actors engaged in the education system, and whether they align or not, both horizontally, across different types of actors, and vertically, from cross-sectoral and national-level policy statements to *de facto* practice in Cox’s Bazar.

**The extent and complexities of structural exclusion facing Rohingya learners derive from government objectives to repatriate and not bear financial responsibility for Rohingya.** For the Government of Bangladesh, Rohingya education serves as an end to repatriation, which itself is influenced by concerns over the financial burden of supporting the refugee population, the political consequences of the refugee influx and deteriorating host community–Rohingya relations. This results in policies that limit access to and quality of Rohingya education. Restrictions have included recurrent delays in curriculum accreditations and (i)NGO permits to operate in Cox’s Bazar, bans on internet and mobile use for remote learning during the pandemic, caps on teacher pay in camps and intimidation of private tutors. As such, the government holds substantial veto power on the ability of international actors to improve the quality of education for Rohingya. Where there have been promising reforms to education provision – that is, agreement to use the Myanmar curriculum – it has been achieved only when framed within a repatriation paradigm. This emphasis on repatriation has anchored the education response around short-term humanitarian support and limited the scope for long-term development strategies, disabling the humanitarian–development nexus.

**There is evidence of horizontal coherence between government, development and humanitarian actors in terms of willingness to ease the pressure on the host community.** Improving the quality of host community education in Cox’s Bazar has thus been the focus of development sector programming, resulting in a rapid spike in basic education projects in the region. Despite high-level leadership tensions and competition for funding between providers during the initial phase of the response, horizontal coordination between education providers in Cox’s Bazar is regularly cited as an operational strength. Horizontal coordination mechanisms have since created opportunities and incentives for sharing knowledge and expertise between education providers. This is particularly needed but difficult, owing to the large and fluctuating number of providers operating in the region.

**With time, however, the emphasis on a humanitarian–development nexus has faded from Joint Response Plans,** likely because of a decline in bilateral donor funding and a deterioration in the relationship between the US and Bangladesh. The hope was development funds could contribute to broader education system coherence, with the financing for host community education motivating the government towards

assimilating Rohingya refugees. This has not been realised. Hargrave et al. (2020) point to criticism in terms of whether enough has been done to leverage funding 'to support an opening of the policy environment for refugees in this and other areas' (p. 30). At the time of writing, there are no globally agreed 'best practice' standards for implementing the humanitarian–development nexus. Consequently, assessing whether the 'financial layering' approach observed in Cox's Bazar aligns with the normative aspirations of nexus advocates is challenging.

**Incoherence at a normative level between the humanitarian sector and the Rohingya community, combined with an absence of institutional mechanisms for localisation, leads to operations that are suboptimal for ensuring continuity and quality of education.** Education has not been categorised as life-saving by either the humanitarian sector in the early years of the displacement or the government during the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to a lack of attention to learning outcomes and continuity. This has resulted in a humanitarian focus on expanding Rohingya access to foundational learning through non-formal and accelerated learning programmes, which, until the recent rollout of the Myanmar curriculum, did not correspond with the Rohingya community's appeals for higher quality of education that resembles the content and format of formal basic and secondary schools. The lack of Rohingya inclusion in the early stages of the response has also led to delays in the design and provision of trauma-informed education programmes for adolescent girls. Government restrictions have since made humanitarian coordination with Rohingya-led education initiatives, such as informal tutoring networks and Madrasas, more difficult. Coordination with Madrasa education in particular is regularly cited as an opportunity but it is unclear whether the government would permit it. Most commonly, NGOs report being consulted to comment on predesigned programmes or at the point of service delivery coordination after overarching strategies and funding allocations have been decided.

**The rollout of the Myanmar curriculum is unlikely to improve learning outcomes as a result of a lack of alignment between funding cycles, data and monitoring systems, and provider-level incentives.** Looking at the humanitarian sector's vertical 'relationships of accountability' (Pritchett, 2015), there is insufficient coherence between Joint Response Plans, humanitarian funding timeframes and provider-level incentives to monitor and improve learning outcomes against shared quality standards. Lack of consistent data comparing learning outcomes across learning providers remains a significant gap in education system coherence. UNICEF does collect some learning outcomes data as part of placement tests but KIs suggest that these are not accessible for other partner organisations working in the region. The current sector-wide data system focuses primarily on evidencing appropriate aid spending and efficiently allocating funding between implementing organisations based on aggregation of student enrolment numbers across learning centres. The rollout of the Myanmar curriculum provides an opportunity to improve alignment here and to require expansion of existent data collection efforts to include longitudinal data on learning outcomes.

**Furthermore, the rollout of the Myanmar curriculum highlights tensions between humanitarian short-term funding and programme modalities and long-term aims of the humanitarian education systems in protracted conflict and crises.** In contexts of protracted crises such as Cox's Bazar, incoherence between the long-term aims of the humanitarian education system and its short-term funding cycles is leading to disruptions and short-term planning at the level of local partner organisations. Relying on reactive development grants and bilateral initiatives to fill funding gaps does not appear to be a sustainable solution to the underlying problem of inflexible and short-term humanitarian funding (Loy and Alexander, 2022). This is particularly so when considering the broader implications of equity in support of conflict-affected populations across country contexts.

**This case study also casts light on the political economy of education in a specific crisis context as dependent on larger regional geopolitics as well as the global politics of humanitarian and development aid.** In both the literature and interviews, local actors consistently highlighted that the government's rejection of international pleas for even partial integration of Rohingya stemmed, to a certain extent, from a backlash against colonial legacies of development, the perceived double standard in how Europe and the

US have historically treated refugees and diminishing humanitarian support in the face of competing crises. The critique of increasingly authoritarian rule in Bangladesh further weakens the pro-Rohingya lobbying of US-led organisations, such as the World Bank and USAID, that play a critical role as global advocates in the sphere of education.

**This Cox's Bazar case study has allowed for further development of an applied conceptual framework for education system coherence in conflict and crisis settings, clarifying the role of national government in setting the boundaries of potential coherence between humanitarian, development, and public sectors.**

While the government holds substantial veto power on the ability of other actors to improve the quality of education for Rohingya communities, it also plays a smaller role in education delivery than is found in some other contexts, such as Nigeria. Essentially, this sets a scene in which education for the Rohingya is delivered through the humanitarian sector and education for the host community by the government with extensive support from development actors. The conceptual framing of this study has thus been further evolved from the first paper of the ERICC political economy and systems' coherence series, which focused on Nigeria, to reflect these elements.

This analysis points toward several key recommendations for strengthening education system coherence for humanitarian and development actors to enhance access, quality, and continuity of education for both Rohingya and host communities:

- Transition from a reactive financing model to predictable and flexible humanitarian funding;
- Involve the Rohingya community not only in service delivery coordination but also in decisions regarding overarching education strategies and the allocation of financial resources;
- Establish secure data-sharing platforms for enhanced usability of existing data;
- Create financial incentives for providers to track and evaluate learning outcomes, beyond student enrolment; and
- Allocate sufficient resources to address the scarcity of Myanmar language skills among Education Sector staff through local problem-solving mechanisms.



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## ANNEX 1:

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

**Instructions:** Please use this guide to interview each person identified as a key informant stakeholder

#### Introduce yourself:

*Good day, I'm (name). I am a researcher with [organisation]. I want to thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.*

#### Explain project:

*We are conducting a project to improve education in six countries that have regions affected by conflict or crisis. [Country] is one of those countries.*

*Our goal is to better understand the state of education in [country] in order to build upon what is already happening. We then want to identify the most effective areas for research to address.*

*To achieve this goal, we are talking to individuals who work in education or education in emergencies in [country]. We want to better understand issues related to students' access to schooling, their ability to progress through school and the quality of that schooling. We are particularly interested in hearing about your experience in this area through your work with [company/organisation].*

*Before we start, we want to let you know that we will be recording this interview and it may be transcribed to ensure that the information that we document is accurate. Results from interviews will not specifically identify individuals interviewed or their organisations. Rather, the results will be reported in aggregate and by the types of stakeholders that have been engaged.*

*Your participation in this session is voluntary, and there will be no individual benefit from your participation. There will not be any negative effects if you decide you do not want to participate. Your responses will be written anonymously and reported in aggregate. No one will know how you responded in the final report. We would like to hear your honest opinions about the topics we discuss. There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions. You can choose not to respond to a question at any time. You can also end the discussion at any time. If one of my questions is unclear, please stop me and I'll ask it in a different way. All information collected from these sessions will be stored securely and kept confidential. None of the comments you make during today's discussion will be linked with your name in any way. The discussion should take about 60 minutes. If you have any questions you can please ask them now or at any time during the discussion.*

*For more information about this project, contact [INSERT EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER]. Do you want to continue?*

#### 1. Respondent information

<b>Country</b> (e.g. Nigeria, Jordan)		<i>[If applicable]</i> <b>Subnational</b> (e.g. Adamawa)	
<b>Sub-subnational</b> (e.g. Local Government Area)		<b>Office</b> (e.g. Planning Division, Adamawa State Ministry of Education)	
<b>Position</b>		<b>Authority</b>	

(e.g. Director)		(e.g. Education research,)	
<b>From stakeholder analysis</b>			
<b>Influence</b>		<b>Interest</b>	
<b>Power</b>			

## 2. Policy and practice document availability (where applicable)

**Please describe** the types of policy documents, guidelines and practice instructions that you have regarding access, quality or continuity/transition in [state], which is a setting of conflict and protracted crisis.

S/N	2.1 Document title, when developed, approving authority	2.2 Purpose of policy or guideline Access Quality Continuity Coherence Other (specify) (Multiple response enabled)	2.3 Availability Yes, hard copy Yes, seen soft copy Yes, seen online Yes, not seen No not seen	2.4 Target beneficiaries Students Teachers Schools Other (specify)	2.5 Where National Subnational Sub-subnational Other (specify)	2.6 If you obtain a copy/photocopy, please assign a reference number to it here (e.g. 2.6.1/country/subnational/sub-subnational/office/position)
e.g.	Relocating students from insurgency areas, guideline issued by Ministry of Education 2018, governor approved					

	Main issue/theme	Probe for
3	Background	I would like to know about your organisation

3.1	Please describe what you and your organisation do with respect to education in conflict and crisis settings	<p>Organisation's overall goal/mandate</p> <p>Specific roles/activities of organisation</p> <p>Specific roles/activities of respondent</p> <p><i>(Use the pre-interview information to probe further)</i></p>
3.2	Please tell me what you consider as the main threats (dangers) to education where there is conflict and protracted crisis in [country]	<p>Effect of conflict on education in their location</p> <p>Impact on students, teachers and parents</p> <p>How it may affect the stakeholder in the future</p> <p>Role of the education sector in a conflict (i) at the subnational level and (ii) at the national level</p>
Note: questions 3.3 and 3.4 are for PEA		
3.3	Have your organisation's <b>work, policies and activities adapted to the conflict?</b> If so, how?	<p>Review of goals/objectives</p> <p>Changes in long-term activities/programmes</p> <p>Any new short-term activities/programmes</p> <p>Changes in roles of the respondent</p> <p>Evidence used to make adjustments/changes</p> <p>Evidence that will be used to make future changes</p>
3.4	Please share with me the policies that guide the work you and your organisation do in education	<p>Adaptation of the policy for a <b>national-level response</b> to conflict and crisis</p> <p>[Where applicable] Adaptation of the policy for a subnational (state)-<b>level response</b> to conflict and crisis</p> <p>Adaptation of the policy at a <b>local level</b> for responding to conflict in the area that is directly under impact</p>
4	<b>State of education</b>	<b>I would like to know about the state of education in the country/state/area</b>
4.1	What education issues are most pressing in [country]?	<p>Access</p> <p>Quality</p> <p>Effect of conflict</p> <p>Alignment of policy, programme and practice</p>

4.2	What are the strengths of the system?	What seems to be working well?  What
<b>4</b>	<b>Access</b>	<b>Let us talk more about access to education in conflict settings</b>
4.1	What do you think are the most concerning challenges for students accessing education in areas of conflict and crisis?	Are students/families/communities aware of educational opportunities that exist?  Are students <i>able</i> to participate in educational opportunities? If not, why?  <i>Potential issues to provide for include</i> location, cost, disruption of schooling, fear of schooling, safety issues, coping with new curriculum, teachers, environment
4.2	Are there policies or programmes that affect students' access to schooling in conflict and crisis? What are they?	Focus on <i>awareness</i> and <i>ability to participate</i>  Are these policies/programmes funded? Are they implemented? Implemented as intended?  Do these policies and programmes apply equally to host country, internally displaced and refugee students? Are some specific to each group? If so, what are they?
4.3	What policies would be helpful for increasing access in areas of conflict and crisis in [country]?	Awareness about education opportunities  Refugee issues/displaced persons  What populations are affected by this gap in policy?  Displaced persons  Marginalised groups (gender, special needs persons)  How does the gap you mention affect education access?
<b>5</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Let us now talk about quality of education in conflict settings</b>
5.1	What are the challenges to providing high-quality education for students in areas of conflict?	Human resource (teachers, counsellors)  Norms and practices (low teaching quality, corporal punishment, low teacher expectations)  Funding and material resources (books, chalk, tablets)  Location  Parental norms or expectations

5.2	What policies, programmes and practices affect the <b>quality of</b> education in areas of conflict and protracted crisis?	<p>Quality for the general population</p> <p>Quality for those marginalised from education (special needs, gender)</p> <p>Are these policies/programmes funded? Are they implemented? Implemented as intended? Do these policies and programmes apply equally to host country, internally displaced and refugee students? Are some specific to each group? If so, what are they?</p>
5.3	Please tell me other resources that are in place, such as human resources for improving quality of education in a conflict setting	<p>Resources at school (e.g. teachers, teacher qualifications, teaching aids, etc.)</p> <p>Resources at household and community level</p> <p>Relationships (e.g. teacher–student relations; community/care-giver involvement, etc.)</p>
5.4	Can you think of policies that would be helpful for increasing quality in areas of conflict and crisis in [country] that don't currently exist?	<p>Resources at school (e.g. teachers, teacher qualifications, teaching aids, etc.)</p> <p>Resources at household and community level</p> <p>Relationships (e.g. teacher–student relations; community/care-giver involvement, etc.)</p>
<b>6</b>	<b>Continuity</b>	<b>We now focus on continuity of education in conflict settings</b>
6.1	What are the challenges to <b>keeping students in school</b> in areas of conflict and crisis?	<p>Challenges with regular attendance (teachers or students)</p> <p>Challenges with grade repetition/failing grades</p> <p>School disruption (Covid-19, elections, attacks, etc.)</p> <p>Challenges with transitions from primary to secondary, etc.</p> <p>Issues may include fear of schooling, lack of infrastructure (school buildings, etc.), human resources (teachers, counsellors)</p>
6.2	What policies, programmes or practices are in place that affect students being able to sustain an education in regions affected by conflict and protracted crisis?	<p>Probe for regular attendance (teachers/students), grade repetition/promotion, school transition, school disruption</p> <p>Are these policies/programmes funded? Are they implemented? Implemented as intended?</p> <p>Do these policies and programs apply equally to host country, internally displaced and refugee students? Are some specific to each group? If so, what are they?</p>

6.2	Can you think of policies that would be helpful for increasing students' sustained learning in areas of conflict and crisis in [country] that don't currently exist?	Probe for regular attendance (teachers/students), grade repetition/promotion, school transition, school disruption  What gap would the policy address? To whom would it apply?
6.3	Please describe the impact of conflict on <b>psychosocial outcomes</b> for children?	Any observation or anecdote about the impact  Any documentation of the impact (request document)  How are these considered in policy-making – is there a specific aspect of policy that addresses these issues?
<b>9</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	
9.1	Of all the policies/programmes for ensuing education access, quality and continuity in settings of conflict and protracted crisis, which ones would you consider most successful?	Please mention them  Why are you impressed by the policy/programme?
10	Interviewee-guided	
	Are there other issues regarding education in conflict and protracted crisis that you would like to share with me?	

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experience and knowledge with us. We can be reached on the phone should you want to contact us.



## ANNEX 2:

### BREAKDOWN OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Organisation category	Total	Sector			Operational level		
		Development	Humanitarian	Government	Local	Regional	National
Camp-in-charges	2			2	2		
Education officers	6			6	4	2	
Commissioners and superintendents	3			3	1	2	
Parents	2	1	1		2		
Coordination group members	3		3			3	
Monitoring and evaluation	1		1				1
Development education sector	1	1				1	
INGOs	6	3	3			5	1
NGOs	3		3		3		
Local researchers	1	1					1
Teachers and learning facilitators	5		4	1	5		
Civil society organisation	2		2			1	1
Total	35	6	17	12	17	14	4

## ANNEX 3:

### PEA TOPIC GUIDE FOR TOP-UP INTERVIEWS

**How to use this guide:** Please use this guide to interview each person identified as a key informant stakeholder. Please note that it is not possible to ask every key and probing question offered in the documents in the 45 to 60 minutes typically allocated to an interview. A menu of questions is provided for each interviewer to have a range of topics and questions to fall back on during the informal discussions with the key informants. The choice and flow of probing questions should be made based on gaps in data collected so far and the dynamics of the interview.

Tip for a successful interview: if the respondent does not know answers to a question, please reassure them that it is no problem as it is just an informal exploratory discussion, and there are no wrong or right answers, and then move on to the next topic.

- Sections in *italics* are instructions or notes for the interviewer.
- The [highlighted] sections require input from the interviewer, such as [name of interviewee's organisation].
- Sentences in **bold** are key questions that interviewers should aim to cover during the discussion.

#### Suggested interview flow

*Introduce yourself:*

*Good day, I'm [name]. I am a researcher with [organisation]. I want to thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.*

*Explain project:*

This interview is part of the data collection for a multi-country research study on the provision of education in the context of conflict and protracted crises. Bangladesh is one of the six countries where we are conducting research. The research is funded by FCDO (the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office).

The aim of the project is to improve access and quality of education in areas of conflict and crisis, building on the progress that the countries have made in the recent years. To achieve this goal, we are talking to individuals who work in education or education in emergencies, including Bangladesh. We want to better understand issues related to students' access to schooling, their ability to progress through school and the quality of that schooling and how the conflict or crisis has affected that.

We are particularly interested in views on how different actors work together in this space, including both development organisations (those focused on long-term development) and humanitarian actors (those focused more on crisis response), noting that there is often overlap in mandates and actors may do both. We are particularly interested in hearing about your experience in this area because of your work with [company/organisation].

*Explain participant rights:*

- Before we start, I would like to tell you that, if it is okay with you I would like to audio record our conversation. Having a recording would help me accurately write up the notes after the discussion.
- Notes from the discussion will not include any of the information that can identify you. Key takeaways from this discussion will be combined with the themes that emerge from other interviews

and written up in a summary report. No one will know how you responded in the final report as none of the comments you make during today's discussion will be linked with your name in any way.

- Your participation in this session is voluntary, and there will be no individual benefit from your participation. There will not be any negative effects if you decide you do not want to participate.
- I would like to hear your honest opinions about the topics we discuss. There are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions.
- You can choose not to respond to a question at any time. You can also end the discussion at any time. If one of my questions is unclear, please stop me and I'll ask it in a different way.
- All information collected from these sessions will be stored securely and kept confidential. The notes will be deleted after six months of us writing up the final report.
- The discussion should take about 45–60 minutes. If you have any questions, you can please ask now or at any time during the discussion. You can also contact the research manager of this project [insert name and contact details]

Ask for consent:

- Do you have any questions about the research project or the interview?
- Can I check that you are still happy to take part in this research?
- Would be it okay if make an audio recording of our discussion?

Fill out respondent details before or after the interview:

<b>Geographical area</b>	
<b>Type of organisation</b> (e.g. local NGO, state official, donor)	
<b>Position</b> (e.g. director)	
<b>Level of influence</b> (political/financing/community)	
<b>Key areas of interest in education</b>	

Key informant background and actors' capacities	Duration
<p><i>To the interviewer: The goal of the opening section is to establish rapport with the participant and to understand what areas of education policy and provision they are most knowledgeable about. Please tailor questions in the following sections based on the participant profile as appropriate.</i></p> <p><b>1. To begin with, I would like to better understand your work. Could you please tell me a bit about your role and responsibilities at [organisation name]?</b></p> <p><i>Probes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How long have you been at this organisation/in this role?</li> <li>● Can you let us know the current projects you are working on and what your role is on them? <i>Probe to find out what the work is focused on: access or continuity or quality of education (teacher training or curriculum development) or psychosocial training</i></li> <li>● Can you let us know a little bit about how your organisation decided to work in this geographical area?</li> </ul>	15 min

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of evidence was used to make these decisions? <i>Probe to find out exact name of database if they cite government evidence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Was the decision demand-led? If so, who made the demand? <i>Probe to see if they proposed the intervention or if they were requested to begin work</i></li> <li>o Were any actors already working in this geographical area and focusing also on the same thematic focus (access/quality/continuity etc)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>2. Thinking about the context of working in Cox’s Bazar, what is the relationship between international organisations and the Government of Bangladesh like?</b></p> <p><i>Probes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specifically, is there a relationship with the MOE or the NGO Affairs Bureau? Is there another ministry that your organisation works more closely with? How does the approach to education vary across these ministries? <i>Probe for the nature of the relationship, i.e. what elements do they make decisions on together? How often do they meet? What do they try to coordinate on? Is there anything the international organisation needs permission from the ministry for in particular related to education? Probe for specific examples when this happened</i></li> <li>• How about at camp level? What are your relationships like with the camp-in-charge? Are they supportive of your work? Are you aware of how the government makes budgetary decisions on education in this area? Does your organisation contribute to discussions around that?</li> <li>• <i>If the organisation worked in the area also before the crisis:</i> Have there been any changes in the ways of working since the beginning of the crisis? Was it a positive or a negative change? Why? What were the key drivers of the change?</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Thinking about the relationship of [their organisation name] with other humanitarian or development organisations, what is the relationship like now?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe which organisations you would think of as humanitarian in the area that you work with? And which ones you think of as development in the area? <i>Probe for the nature of the relationship, i.e. what elements do they make decisions on together? How often do they meet? What do they try to coordinate on? Probe for specific examples when this happened</i></li> <li>• Can you see any difference in the two organisations and the groups of children they focus on?</li> <li>• To what extent are the two sectors aligned in their vision and end goals for education in Bangladesh?</li> <li>• <i>If the organisation worked in the area also before the crisis:</i> Has the dynamic changed since the beginning of the crisis?</li> <li>• Any changes in the set of organisations you collaborate with over time?</li> <li>• From what we understand, there have been tensions between IMO and UNHCR in the responsibility for the management of the response. Is this something you have experienced? If so, how has it impacted the education response? <i>Prompts: different camps under different agency control; lack of clear accountability; challenges with coordination</i></li> </ul>	
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- Is there anything you would like to see differently in the way these organisations work together? *Probe for what that is and ask for specific examples that show how this change is not there at present*
  - o What were the key barriers to changing the ways of working?
  - o What could help promote this change going forward?

**4. Thinking about the relationship of [their organisation name] with (other) INGOs, what is the relationship like now?**

*Probes:*

- Any changes in the set of organisations you collaborate with over time?
- To what extent are INGOs aligned in their vision and end goals for education?
- What are the key mechanisms for coordination between INGOs, local actors, and the government?
- How often do coordination meetings take place? Who leads the meetings? What do INGOs try to coordinate on? *Probe for specific examples.*
- Is there anything that is working well in coordination between INGOs and other types of organisations?
- Is there anything you would like to see differently in the way different type of organisations work together? *Ask for specific examples where possible.*
  - o What were the key barriers to changing the ways of working?
  - o What could help promote this change going forward?
- ASK IF APPROPRIATE: Which organisations you would think of as humanitarian in the area that you work with? And which ones you think of as development in the area?

**5. Thinking about the relationship of [their organisation name] with local organisation, including local NGOS/CSOs, what is the relationship like now?**

*Use the same probes as for the question above.*

*How does your organisation, and the international response more generally, involve Rohingya refugee communities in decision-making and design of education programmes? Do you think this engagement has been done well? What would you want to improve? What are the main difficulties? Do you see specific organisations/types of organisations engaging more effectively with refugee communities?*

**6. To my knowledge there are several coordinating groups in the region. Which of the groups that you come across in your work is most effective in promoting collaboration and understanding between organisations?**

- What makes them different and better compared with other coordination efforts?
- What role do nations' actors play in this coordination group? What is the balance between local and foreign staff?
- Has language been a barrier to mutual understanding and coordination?
- What are the key communications channels in this group? (Regular meetings/forums/mailling lists/regular publications)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the group connect with any broader education coordination groups also working in the area?</li> </ul>	
<b>Coordination on specific education policies and programmes (operations)</b>	
<p><i>Note to interviewer: questions in the following section are anchored in specific education policy areas but the overarching focus should still be on cohesion, especially between humanitarian and development actors. You don't have to explore all questions in this section (take into consideration time allocated/ participant expertise).</i></p> <p><b>Thank you so much for your insight so far. If it is okay with you, next I would like to explore a few different areas education provision in Cox's Bazar, such as the rollout of the Myanmar curriculum, collaborations with Madrasa education, availability of teacher training and improving education for the host community.</b></p> <p><b>7. With regard to the <u>host community</u>, are you aware of any initiatives in Cox's Bazar focusing on improving the quality of education of children in the host community?</b></p> <p>IF YES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does the programme/initiative entail? (Content, place, frequency, duration)</li> <li>Who is delivering this support? (Government/local NGO/humanitarian/development)</li> <li>Who are the initiatives funded by? If joint funding (state/donor), how is it coordinated? Do these actors work together or they work separately?</li> <li>Are there other actors doing something similar? Probe for examples</li> <li>Do you think the programme is successful?</li> </ul> <p><b>8. It is my understanding that lack of quality <u>teachers</u> and teacher development programmes is a key barrier to improving education in Cox's Bazar. Do you know if there has been any support available to teachers working in the area?</b></p> <p><i>Probes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does the programme/initiative entail?</li> <li>Who is delivering this support? Who is funding it?</li> <li>Are there any differences in what the government is doing to support teachers and what international actors like yourselves are focusing on?</li> <li>In your opinion/knowledge do these actors work together or they work separately when it comes to focus on teachers?</li> <li>Which actors are not involved in supporting teachers, but you feel like could play a bigger role?</li> </ul> <p>IF NOT DISCUSSED SO FAR:</p> <p><b>9. Do you know whether anything is being done to help transition from the LCFA to the Myanmar curriculum?</b></p> <p><i>Probes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think this change will improve learning for children? Why/why not?</li> </ul>	25 min

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which actors advocated for this change? Which actors opposed it? Why do you think approval for use of the curriculum took so long? And what pushed it over the line?</li> <li>• Have you heard of any initiatives to provide Myanmar language training for teachers? Who is administering it? Who is funding it?</li> <li>• Could you please tell me a bit more about what actions have been taken and by whom?</li> <li>• Has there been any resistance to this from state actors/international actors/parents/teachers/community leaders?</li> <li>• What are going to be the key barriers to transitioning? <i>Probe for examples that illustrate the key barrier</i></li> </ul> <p><b>10. Do you know what, if anything, is being done to improve collaboration and coordination between Madrasas (or other community-led education initiatives) and NGO-led school system in the camps?</b></p> <p><i>Probe as appropriate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the actors most interested in addressing this issue? Any examples of initiatives?</li> <li>• How has the government ban on informal home learning centres and community-led schools (December 2021) affected education in the camps? <i>Do you know what led to this ban – what actors supported it, who opposed it?</i></li> <li>• Looking forward, do you see many prospects for more effective international coordination with informal education initiatives in the camps?</li> <li>• Are there any differences in views of what the coordination should look like between local and foreign actors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o To what extent is shared vision between stakeholders?</li> <li>o Are there any gaps or duplication of efforts?</li> <li>o What are the key barriers to promoting understanding and collaboration with Madrasas?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>11. Do you know if there any data systems that track learning outcomes for children attending schools in camp-like settings?</b></p> <p><b>12. Looking forward, how far ahead is your organisation looking in terms of providing education in the camps? Are you able to develop medium-long term strategies?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it difficult to plan for the longer term given the context? What are the main challenges? <i>Prompts: Government emphasis on repatriation; short funding timeframes</i></li> </ul> <p><b>13. Do you know whether anything is being done to keep girls and older adolescents living in camps/camp-like structures in schools?</b></p> <p><i>Probe as appropriate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the key actors working on this issue? (Local/humanitarian/donors)</li> <li>• To what extent is there a shared vision/coherence in their efforts?</li> <li>• Who is best equipped to address this issue?</li> <li>• What are the gaps in provisions? What are the causes?</li> </ul>	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any examples of duplication of efforts or divergent views?</li> <li>What are the key barriers to keeping girls and older adolescents in school?</li> </ul> <p><b>14. We've focused mainly on Cox's Bazar. How about education provision on Bhasan Char Island? Is your organisation involved in that? If so, how is it similar or different to the work in Cox's Bazar?</b></p>	
<b>Mechanisms to coordinate strategies and funding</b>	
<p>For the last 10–15 minutes I would like to focus on the relationships and coherence between humanitarian and development actors.</p> <p><b>15. Based on your experience, to what extent is crisis-related humanitarian funding allocated to education?</b></p> <p><i>Probe as appropriate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is it merged or managed as separate from other education budgets (development education budgets)?</li> <li>Is it amount enough? Why/why not?</li> <li>Which factors do they consider when deciding which areas and organisations (schools/NGOs/etc.) should get the funding? Why?</li> <li>Who has the final say on where the funding from humanitarian and development agencies is allocated?</li> <li>To what extent do the humanitarian and development actors have an overview of the overall funding flows for the region?</li> </ul>	10 min
<b>Thank you and close</b>	
<p><b>Thank you so much for sharing your experience and knowledge with me today, it was very helpful. I do not have any further questions at this point. Do you have any questions for me?</b></p> <p><i>IF APPROPRIATE:</i></p> <p><b>If I have any questions about what we have discussed today, would it be okay if I reached out to you via email/phone for clarifications?</b></p> <p><i>Tell them about the next steps in the research project:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In terms of next steps for the research project, we are going to combine your insights with what we have learned from other participants in a written report. Just to reassure you, all of your data will be kept anonymous and your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the notes or in the report.</li> <li>The notes and the recording will be deleted securely within six months of us submitting the report to FCDO.</li> <li>If you would like to learn more about the project, you can do so online by looking up ERICC (Education Research in Emergencies and Protracted Crisis) or emailing me.</li> <li>Thank you.</li> </ul>	3 min



## ANNEX 4:

### ODI IRB ETHICS APPROVAL



25<sup>th</sup>/05/2023

#### ODI INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD: PROPOSAL CONFIRMATION CERTIFICATION

**Reference:** *RO230013- Political economy of humanitarian-development coherence in education in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh*

Please accept this written confirmation from your Ethics Signatory [The Research Ethics Committee] as they confirm the APPROVAL of the proposed research: Political economy of humanitarian-development coherence in education in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

The REC concluded the outcome of their reviews as:

**The Project Recommendation:** Should PROCEED

- Reviewer 1 – PROCEED
- Reviewer 2 – PROCEED

Thank you for your project/proposal submission to the REC (with supplied documents and forms)

If you wish to respond with any further questions or comments regarding the outcome - please respond & CC in [RECCoordinator@odi.org.uk](mailto:RECCoordinator@odi.org.uk)

**REC Coordinator**

ODI  
203 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NJ  
United Kingdom



## ABOUT ERICC

**The Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium is a global research and learning partnership that strives to transform education policy and practice in conflict and protracted crisis around the world — ultimately to help improve holistic outcomes for children — through building a global hub for rigorous, context-relevant and actionable evidence base.**

ERICC seeks to identify the most effective approaches for improving access, quality, and continuity of education to support sustainable and coherent education systems and holistic learning and development of children in conflict and crisis. ERICC aims to bridge research, practice, and policy with accessible and actionable knowledge — at local, national, regional and global levels — through co-construction of research and collaborative partnerships.

ERICC is led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with Academic Lead IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, and expert partners include Centre for Lebanese Studies, Common Heritage Foundation, Forcier Consulting, ODI, Osman Consulting, Oxford Policy Management and Queen Rania Foundation. During ERICC's inception period, NYU-TIES provided research leadership, developed the original ERICC Conceptual Framework and contributed to early research agenda development. ERICC is supported by UK Aid.

Countries in focus include Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria.

