From barriers to breakthroughs: progress in primary education for refugees

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Welcome and introductions
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Panelists

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REFUGEE EDUCATION
What the data says

- Secondary enrolment for refugee youths is markedly lower than primary
- Gender disparities persist
- Clear disparities when comparing access rates for refugees versus national averages
- Many factors affect quality education, but with the right opportunities refugees exceed national exam averages

Source: 2023 UNHCR Global Education Report (covering the academic year 2021-2022 over 70 refugee-hosting countries)
Findings and overall report
The inclusion continuum

No inclusion

Fully inclusive

Finance mechanisms as a lever of change

Policy breakthroughs

Delivery breakthroughs

Access, learning, social cohesion

Access, learning, social cohesion
The inclusion continuum

No inclusion

BANGLADESH
- Camp-based non-accredited education under policy constraints
- Finance primarily sourced from humanitarian funding schemes
- Solid coordination

RWANDA
- Refugee hosting schools managed by MINEDUC
- Government budget finances hosting schools
- Refugee education data integrated in national EMIS

Fully inclusive

finance mechanisms as a lever of change

Policy breakthroughs
Delivery breakthroughs

Access, learning, social cohesion

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
COUNTRIES FEATURED IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

- Iraq
- Islamic Republic of Iran
- Pakistan
- Bangladesh
- Mauritania
- Cameroon
- Djibouti
- Ecuador
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Rwanda
- Zambia

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
Enablers of success: responses from refugees

- **Parents** were identified as one of the main “success factors” for enrolment and learning: encouraging their own children to study and parents of other families to send their children to school.

- **Pathways** to secondary and higher education, via a formal national curriculum, motivate refugees to study at primary school.

- **Peaceful collaboration** between refugees and host community members was valued by students in Rwanda and by teachers in Bangladesh.
Enablers of success: improving access

- Community awareness campaigns conducted in close collaboration with parents.
- Viable post-primary education pathways, including accessible, accredited, quality secondary education.
- Refugees put a high value on access to formal, national curricula.
- Creating female only learning spaces where necessary.
Enablers of success: improving quality

- The introduction of a new curriculum is a good opportunity to assign children to grades based on their learning levels, and to upgrade teachers’ skills.
- Teacher development that combines short courses with supervised classroom practice and peer-learning.
- Pairing national and refugee teachers in collaborative teams.
- Activities to build social cohesion.
Enablers of success: progressing inclusion

- Transitioning from a parallel education system to a fully inclusive one is **technically and politically complex**. It requires close coordination and careful sequencing. Progress requires coordinated and proactive actions by governments, humanitarian and development actors.
- An education technical expert in the UNHCR country office can help to accelerate the transition.
- Key moments in national education planning and reform can be used as windows of opportunity.
- Close partnership with **local education authorities** are needed
- Close engagement with **refugee communities** is important.
Enablers of success: financing

- Donor investment in school infrastructure in refugee hosting areas can support the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, provided there is close coordination.
- There are clear efforts at the global level to coordinate donor support, but coordination at the national level can be more challenging.
- Any reduction in humanitarian funding needs to be accompanied by additional international development funding to national education systems.
Rwanda Case Study
ACCESS

- Primary enrolment rates for refugees are high, with **94% of primary school-age refugee children** attending school.

QUALITY

- Emphasis on **professional development for teachers** (training, on-the-job support and mentorship).
- Introduction of **education technology** in line with the national policy, with content approved by REB and accessible offline.
- Diverse offer of **extracurricular activities** including girls’ clubs, peace initiatives and sport is improving **social cohesion within the school community**.
- **Improving infrastructure** to create safe learning spaces and improve wellbeing of the school community.
FINANCE

- **Refugee hosting schools benefit from national development programmes:** teachers in schools hosting refugees are paid by the Government (except 2 schools based in 1 of the camps where refugee teachers are paid incentives)

- **Gradual shift from a humanitarian approach to a developmental focus** with emphasis on sustainable livelihoods and social cohesion
  - The World Bank has funded the construction of 250 classrooms (primary and secondary) as part of an IDA grant through the Refugee Sub Window (RSW)
Refugees are included in national services such as education, health and socioeconomic and financial inclusion

- By end of 2023, 96% of refugees and asylum-seekers are included (40% in 2013)


UNHCR-led advocacy and coordination focus on ensuring that refugees have access to free education and household expenses are covered.
Improve the quality of education by upgrading school infrastructure

Dilapidated Old Classrooms in Kiziba, June 2016

Newly constructed Classrooms in Kiziba, November 2022
Improve the quality of education by upgrading school WASH facilities
Bangladesh Case Study
Context

- Around 980,000 Rohingya refugees (around 50% are school-aged) are residing in the refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar and Bashan char.
- The majority of the Rohingya are recognized as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN).
- The National Taskforce headed by MoFA is the decision-making authority.
- Inclusion in the national education system is not allowed.
- Rohingya have minimal access to skills training and livelihood activities.
- The Government of Bangladesh authorized skills development framework, volunteer recruitment, and incentive guideline.
- The GoB authorized the introduction of the Myanmar Curriculum.
**ACCESS**

- **Introduction of the Myanmar curriculum for KG to Grade 10 among new arrivals since 2021** led to increased enrolment and retention [81% attendance rate]
  - **Formal national curriculum with a clear grade structure** versus non-formal Learning Competency Framework Approach (LCFA)
  - **Placement tests** used to enrol out-of-school children and raise awareness of the availability and value of education
- **Government authorized use of the English version of the global curriculum** in early 2024 to address challenges in attendance and engagement among old caseload under Bangladesh curriculum until 2019
- **Positive attitude shift towards girls’ education** since establishment of separate sessions/classrooms for upper primary and secondary female students
- **Community-based learning space approach (incl homes)** due to space constraints
Significant investment in teacher capacity development for Rohingya and national teachers, including play-based approaches and supervised classroom practice

- Certified mentorship training (250 MTs)
- Certified training in pedagogy (4,000 teachers participated, 1,429 are females)
- Peer-to-peer support and teacher learning circles
- Myanmar Language training
- Subject contents training
- Training on cross-cutting issues

Year-end assessment and joint monitoring visits by sector, SAG and SAG plus

Resources allocated to create safe learning spaces: well-lit, ventilated classrooms with stimulating resources
POLICY AND COORDINATION

- Inter Sector Coordination Group led by UNHCR
- Education Sector Coordination co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children
- Strategic Advisory Group co-chaired by UNHCR and Additional Deputy Commissioner (Edu. And ICT)
- Different technical consultative platform
  - Technical Consultative Group
  - ECD working group
  - Youth Working Group
- 43 active education partners (UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs)
- Rohingya Donor Group
Why it matters?
Success in primary education for refugees requires carefully managed transitions:

- of individual students into the appropriate class
- language & curriculum
- school ownership and management
- teacher management (including payment)
- from humanitarian to national financing with development partner support
Questions and discussion
THANK YOU!