



UNICEF EDUCATION

Education Case Study

BANGLADESH

Prioritising learning for Rohingya children

15 June 2021

COVID-19 compounded an already bleak situation for Rohingyas who fled neighbouring Myanmar due to protracted violence since August 2017. Most reside in Cox's Bazar—one of the most impoverished districts of Bangladesh—which now houses [877,710 Rohingyas](#), of whom 456,410 are school-aged children in 34 camps. Many Rohingya children lacked access to education in Myanmar and thus prior learning levels were alarmingly low. In response, UNICEF Bangladesh has boosted construction of learning centres (LCs) to reach the rising influx of Rohingya children, while focusing on improving the quality of learning. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, UNICEF alone provided education opportunities for 70 *per cent* of Rohingya children aged 4-14 years, or 230,000 children (110,400 girls).

In March 2020, all schools and LCs in the Rohingya camps and host communities closed. This forced educators to find alternative solutions for over 350,000 (168,000 girls) Rohingya and 745,000 (365,050 girls) Bangladeshi children whose learning was disrupted. While distance learning was introduced, these vulnerable children were unable to access remote modalities equally due to a lack of electricity and restricted access to internet connectivity and devices, including radios. Due to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths in 2021, the Government has extended the closure of education institutions until mid June 2021, and the decision to reopen depends on the positivity rate in the country.

RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Caregiver-led learning at home mitigates learning loss.** When LCs closed, to minimise learning loss, UNICEF supported caregiver-led education at home. In January 2021, UNICEF Bangladesh distributed 435,348 workbooks and other learning resources to benefit 190,663 children (91,518 girls) in the camps for use in

caregiver-led learning. Due to low literacy levels of caregivers and parents, household visits by Burmese language instructors, in compliance with COVID-19 prevention measures, remained critical. During strict lockdown, Bangladeshi national teachers would also phone in to support small group work in the camps.

- **Contextualized radio programming for teachers and caregivers.** UNICEF Bangladesh, in partnership with local radio stations, is broadcasting programmes directly from the camps for caregivers, teachers and students. For caregivers, UNICEF will provide devices to play audio instruction and provide guidance on how best to engage with learners to support educational activities at home. The radio show for teachers focuses on professional development topics such as lesson planning, classroom management, self-care and how to ensure a safe space to learn. For Rohingya learners, radio programming was also undertaken as talk shows, with a storytelling format to facilitate interaction between caregivers and children, to keep learners motivated and to build children's vocabularies and comprehension skills. Going forward, UNICEF plans to distribute audio playback devices, such as radio and MP4 players, to LCs and households to support resilient remote learning initiatives.
- **Schools in host communities need extra reinforcement.** To address challenges that contribute to school dropout and poor learning outcomes for children, UNICEF disbursed cash grants to all 657 government primary schools in Cox's Bazar. Due to differences in needs identified by school management committees, activities supported by these grants vary from school to school, but typically include provision of furniture, water, sanitation and hygiene

facilities and learning materials. UNICEF also helped train 1,400 national teachers (420 female) and school management committee members on the safe reopening guidelines issued by the Government.

- **Piloting a new curriculum for Rohingya learners.** In January 2020, the Government of Bangladesh granted approval for the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot (MCP) in camps, transitioning away from the [Learning Competency Framework and Approach \(LCFA\)](#), an informal learning programme rolled out in January 2019. This was due to Rohingya families expressing desires for their children to learn in the Myanmar curriculum, recognizing their long-term needs will be unmet by an informal curriculum and without documentation of learning. While learning centres were closed due to COVID-19, key milestones reached in 2020 included the development of an MCP plan of action and technical guidelines; signing agreements with six implementing partners and Rohingya community education networks; assessment of learning facilities; and printing of teaching and learning materials for 10,000 students and 250 teachers.

NEXT STEPS

UNICEF aims to shift all Rohingya children from the LCFA to the Myanmar Curriculum in the coming years. Next steps for UNICEF to prepare for the MCP launch, as soon as schools reopen, include a survey to identify 12,224 learners (4,214 girls) and the recruitment and training of teachers. Additionally, radio programming will be scaled up, broadcast via Bluetooth to caregivers' phones and hosted on the [Learning Passport](#), which is now being used to train trainers in the education sector to progress professional competencies and development.

Cost effectiveness: From January 2020 to date, UNICEF Bangladesh, has provided over US\$70.28 million to ensure the continuity of learning to Rohingya children and Bangladeshi boys and girls living in host communities, benefitting 230,000 children. UNICEF is appealing for US\$201.67 million in 2021, of which US\$69.7 million is to support children in Rohingya camps.

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