POLICY BRIEF:

Implementing the Myanmar Curriculum in Rohingya camps: overcoming challenges and barriers

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 a 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.

Executive summary

This policy brief draws from the findings of a comprehensive Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) research study titled "Formative research on system coherence for quality and effective delivery of the Myanmar Curriculum in Cox's Bazar" (forthcoming). The study was developed in response to existing gaps identified through a comprehensive evidence review[1] and a country scan process that involved extensive consultations with stakeholders involved in the response to the Rohingya crisis in Cox's Bazar[2]. The study aimed to identify factors affecting the implementation of the Myanmar Curriculum (MC) for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, focusing on policy-level enablers and constraints, as well as local factors affecting education delivery.

Implementation of the MC in Cox's Bazar refugee camps marks a vital step towards delivering quality education to Rohingya refugee children. The review findings show that, while this initiative offers a structured curriculum that is culturally relevant, significant challenges remain, including a shortage of qualified teachers, language barriers and inadequate infrastructure. To ensure the sustainability of educational initiatives, it is imperative to address these challenges through comprehensive teacher training, mentorship programmes, language support and long-term and flexible funding.

A. Background

Cox's Bazar District in Bangladesh represents one of the most challenging environments globally for education amidst conflict and protracted crisis. The district hosts over one million Rohingya individuals, including approximately 481,000 school-age children, who have fled Myanmar due to longstanding discrimination by the Myanmar government and a significant episode of state violence in 2017[3]. This predominantly Muslim community now resides in 33 overcrowded camps within Cox's Bazar.

The Bangladesh government has not granted the Rohingya legal status or provided basic inclusion opportunities, including education, with the aim of eventual repatriation. This situation poses significant social and economic challenges for the country. Education in Cox's Bazar faces numerous challenges, including non-formal learning opportunities, inadequately trained and inexperienced instructors, language barriers and restrictions on the use of the national curriculum.

There remain substantial gaps in evidence regarding system coherence, accountability and the enablers and constraints at both policy and local system levels. The fragile security situation and host government restrictions on Bangla-language education have imposed multiple barriers to access, quality and continuity of education for decades[4]. However, the Government of Bangladesh has recently permitted humanitarian partners to provide Rohingya refugee children with the opportunity to learn the Myanmar Curriculum (MC) up to Grade 10[5].

[1] Saha, P., Haque, A., Hasan, G., Abedin, M., Dow, J., Zaw, H. T. & Ferrans, S. (2023). Evidence to Practice: The Case of Education in an Emergency Context – Cox's Bazar.EVIDENCE TO PRACTICE: THE CASE OF EDUCATION IN AN EMERGENCY CONTEXT – COX'S BAZAR. ERICC Working Paper

[2] Haque, A., Diazgranados, S., Saha, P., Abedin, M. &, Hasan, G. (2023). ERICC Country Research Agenda. Cox's Bazar. ERICC

[3] UNICEF (2022). More than Words: UNICEF's Response to Language Barriers in Rohingya Refugee Camps. Case Study 6_CXB C4D (unicef.org)

[4] Rahman, M. M., Shindaini, A. J. M. & Husain, T. (2022). Structural barriers to providing basic education to Rohingya children in the Kutupalong refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. International Journal of Educational Research Open

[5] Saha, P., Haque, A., Hasan, G., Abedin, M., Dow, J., Zaw, H. T. & Ferrans, S. (2023). Evidence to Practice: The Case of Education in an Emergency Context – Cox's Bazar. ERICC Working Paper

B. Overview of research and methodology

The research examined various aspects that enable or constrain the implementation of the MC, including government policies, teacher recruitment, training and evaluation programmes, as well as the alignment between the MC and the Alternative Learning Program (ALP) for over-aged students. Key objectives included assessing the current policy for MC delivery, mapping learning facilities, evaluating teacher recruitment and training and identifying practical solutions to challenges in teacher retention and evaluation.

The study used a mixed-methods approach, with qualitative and quantitative primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through: classroom observations in 132 MC learning centres; and interviews and surveys with 3 government officials, 17 education implementing partners' managers, 264 students, 132 teachers and 26 master trainers. Secondary data were sourced from organizations such as the Cox's Bazar education sector, UNICEF and BRAC, covering teacher training, recruitment and policy frameworks.

C. Key findings

1. Policy system level

Key actors in the education system: The Bangladesh government, through the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), plays a key role in implementing the Myanmar Curriculum (MC) for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, alongside the development and humanitarian sectors. While the government views the MC as a temporary measure until repatriation, the humanitarian sector seeks long-term educational solutions. This difference in approach creates challenges in ensuring sustained access to quality education, as government support is crucial for maintaining continuous interventions.

Table 1 : An Overview of Key Implementation Actors for Myanmar Curriculum

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Government	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), under Ministry of Foreign Affairs holds administrative power, and is a key coordinating partner for education delivery inside the camp
Development Partners	Provides essential fundings for programme implementation inside the camp, organization priorities shape funding allocation across different sectors, key funders for education include UN organizations, USAID, and ECHO
Humanitarian Sector	Cox's Bazar Education Sector is the pivotal actor for education delivery inside the camps, working with partners on appeals, strategy and implementation
Religious Sector	A number of Qwami madrasahs provide learning opportunities as part of religious education, limited coordination with Education Sector

Funding cycles and sustainability: The disparity between long-term funding needs in the development sector and the short-term funding cycles prevalent in the humanitarian sector poses significant challenges. This misalignment jeopardizes teacher recruitment, capacity development and curriculum implementation, threatening the sustainability of education initiatives.

Challenges in MC implementation: Several challenges hinder effective implementation of the MC, including a large refugee population, inexperienced teachers and a lack of coordinated monitoring. Teacher recruitment and retention are problematic, with high turnover rates among host community teachers (over 26% annually), while Rohingya teachers face language and subject knowledge gaps. Low salaries and limited career advancement also hamper retention. Inadequate professional development, especially for host teachers, further exacerbates these issues. Additional barriers include outdated teaching methods, insufficient teacher training programmes and disparities in education access across different regions.

Training and credentialing: Training programmes are short and lack proper assessment, while credentialing systems create disparities within the teaching profession, hindering career advancement. Effective monitoring and evaluation of teacher training programmes and implementation initiatives are crucial to address these issues and ensure the curriculum's success.

Data collection and monitoring: Data collection and monitoring efforts are fragmented, with no unified platform to share information beyond the Education Sector's monthly 5W report[6], which covers only limited aspects of access. This lack of coordination hampers effective policy-making and collaboration among education partners, limiting the overall success of the MC's implementation in Cox's Bazar.

Figure 1: Cox's Bazar education programme data flow
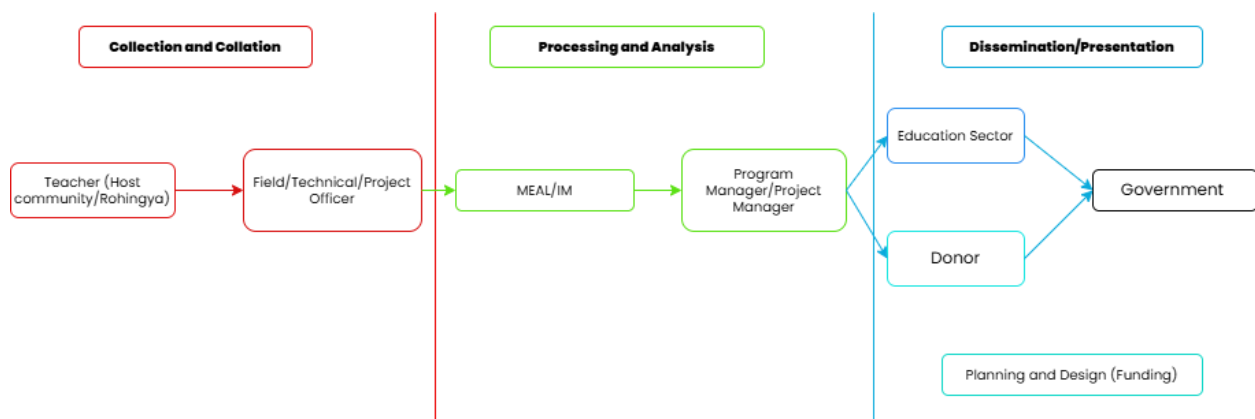
Source: ERICC Data system mapping report[7]

Policy system enablers

- Government policy and support: allows Rohingya children to access education through the MC up to Grade 10.

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[6] Education | Rohingya Response. (n.d.). https://rohingyaresponse.org/sectors/coxs-bazar/education/

[7] Hasan, G., Haque, A., Abedin, M., Saha, P., Dow, J., Zaw, H. & Diazgranados, S (August 2022). Data System Mapping of Cox's Bazar Education for Rohingya and Host Community. ERICC Working Paper.

- International collaboration and funding: support from international organizations ensures well-coordinated curriculum delivery.
- Teacher recruitment and training: policies and training programmes equip teachers to deliver the MC.
- Infrastructure development: initiatives enhance educational infrastructure, including classrooms and learning materials.

Policy system constraints

- Adolescent educational barriers: motivation issues due to lack of accreditation and early marriage; many adolescents have no prior learning experience.
- Pressure on educational structures: overcrowding and resource shortages impact education quality.
- Lack of accredited education: historical denial of formal education limits community engagement with the MC.
- Quality of education: inadequate teacher training affects curriculum delivery and student outcomes.
- Funding cycles: misalignment affects curriculum implementation; continuation of programmes like Education Cannot Wait is uncertain.
- Data and monitoring: lack of robust systems limits quality assurance.

2. Local system level

Teacher experience and well-being: The Myanmar Curriculum (MC) implementation in Cox's Bazar faces significant challenges due to inexperienced teachers and low levels of teacher well-being. Nearly two-thirds of teachers have no prior experience with the Myanmar Curriculum and some camps (such as Camps 3, 6 and 20) have no experienced teachers at all. Major stressors include inadequate salaries, heavy workloads and poor school facilities, with 92% of teachers citing low pay as a career obstacle. Many teachers handle multiple subjects and classes, leading to insufficient rest and increased stress. Addressing these issues is crucial for effective education delivery under the MC.

Figure 2 : Teachers with Burmese teaching experience prior to MC (left) & teachers' experience distribution (right)
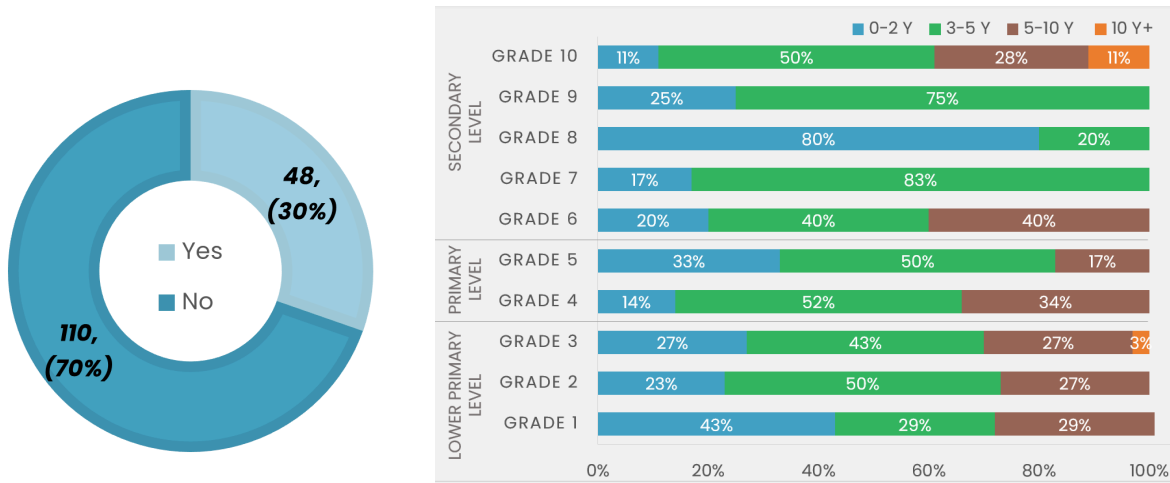
Gender imbalances in the teaching workforce: Gender imbalances in the teaching workforce affect educational access for girls, as parents prefer female teachers for their daughters. Early childhood and primary education tend to have more female teachers, which aligns with parental preferences. However, the lack of gender balance becomes more pronounced in older grades, as evidenced by the data. This shortage of qualified female teachers, particularly among the Rohingya community, limits educational opportunities for girls and exacerbates existing barriers to their continued education.

Figure 3: Teacher distribution by gender (left) & teacher distribution by subject-matter knowledge (right)
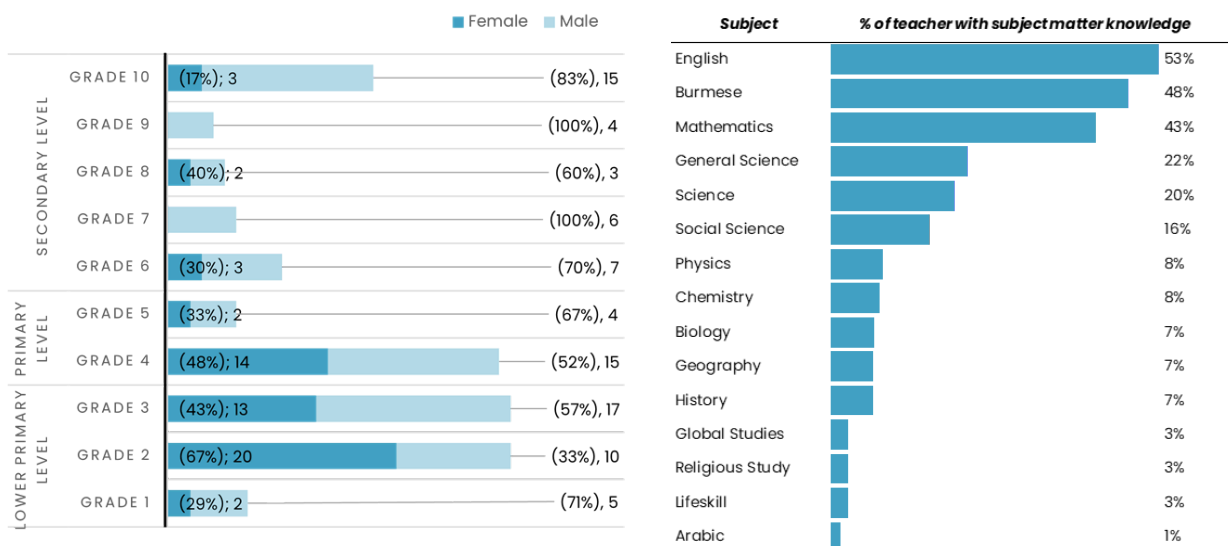
Subject matter knowledge: While the MC requires the implementation of a variety of subjects, teachers' subject-matter knowledge is limited beyond English, Burmese and mathematics. Fewer than 10% of teachers have expertise in specialized subjects required in secondary education, such as

physics, chemistry and biology. This limitation poses ongoing challenges in expanding teachers' subject-matter knowledge, especially at secondary level.

Student assessments and foundational skills: Assessments reveal significant gaps in literacy and numeracy among Rohingya students. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) results show weak skills in decoding, phonics and number identification. Older students particularly struggle with reading fluency and comprehension, highlighting the need for targeted curriculum interventions.

Figure 4 : Distribution of students by performance levels in EGRA (timed tasked)

Legend: ■ Zero ■ Below Target ■ At/above target

Skill	Zero	Below Target	At/above target
Letter Naming	1%	9%	90%
Letter sound knowledge	1%	10%	89%
Familiar word reading	3%	24%	73%
Nonsense word decoding	4%	35%	62%
Oral reading fluency	17%	17%	65%
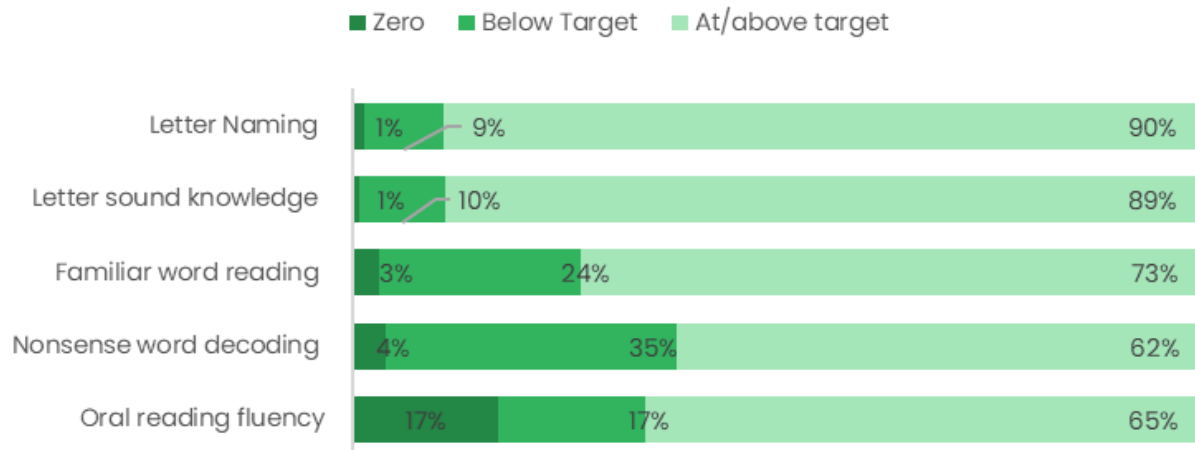
Figure 5 : Distribution of students by performance levels in EGMA (timed tasked)

Legend: ■ Zero ■ Below Target ■ At/above Target

Skill	Zero	Below Target	At/above Target
Number Identification	1%	14%	85%
Quantity Discrimination	2%	14%	85%
Missing Number	6%	38%	56%
Addition Level 1	2%	32%	66%
Subtraction Level 1	2%	44%	55%
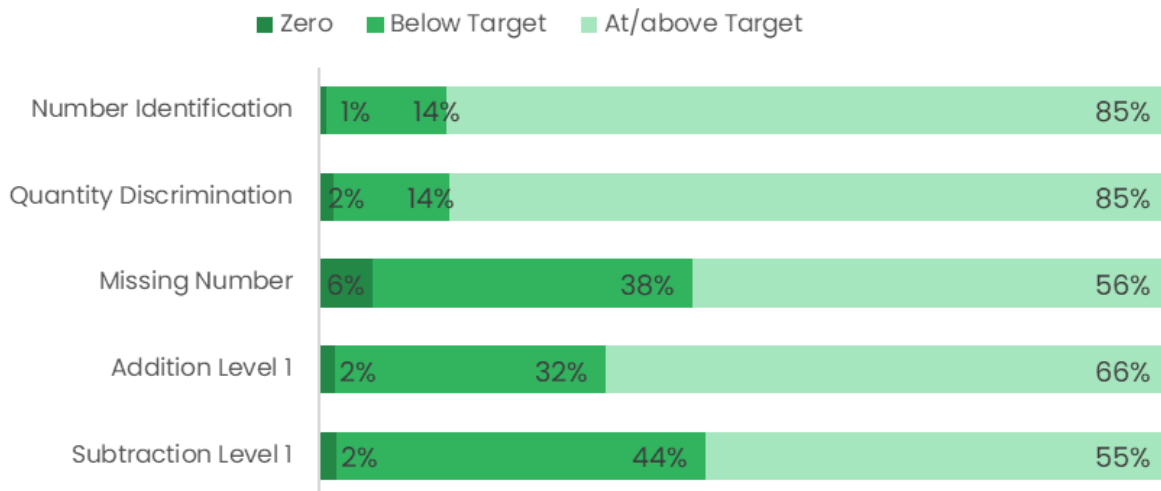
Gender disparities in student performance: The EGRA and EGMA data reveal gender disparities in student performance, particularly in mathematics, in which male students outperformed female students in tasks like subtraction and addition. Both higher- and lower-grade students struggle with number identification, highlighting the need for improved teaching methods and targeted interventions.

Figure 6 : Gender-based performance levels in basic EGMA tasks

Male   Female

Task	Male	Female
Number Identification	83%	74%
Quantity Discrimination	84%	76%
Missing Number	65%	53%
Addition Level 1	71%	58%
Subtraction Level 1	59%	54%
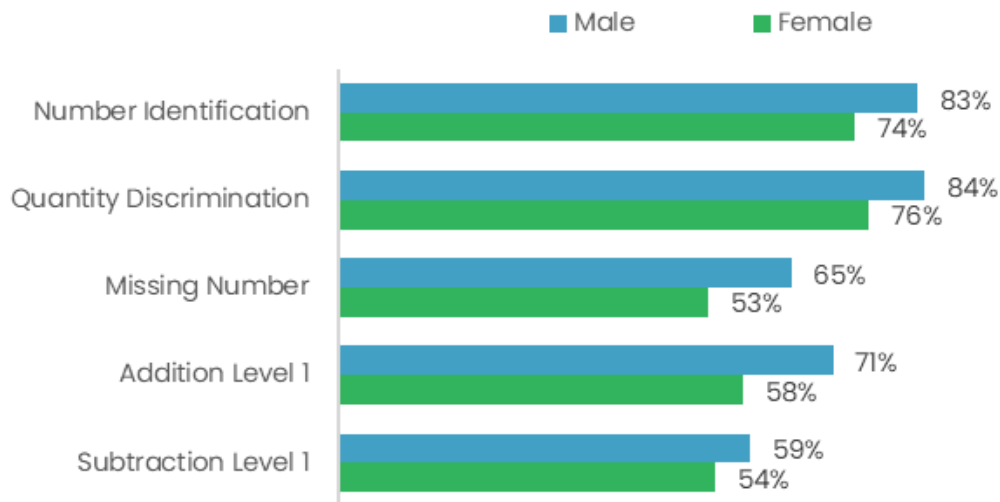
Classroom resources: Resources in classrooms are limited, with many lacking essential furniture and learning materials. Chalkboards are the most common resource, present in 90% of classrooms, but many lack tables, chairs or other basic supplies. Learning materials observed include letter/word cards, math manipulatives, art supplies and games, but no classrooms had smartboards or projectors.
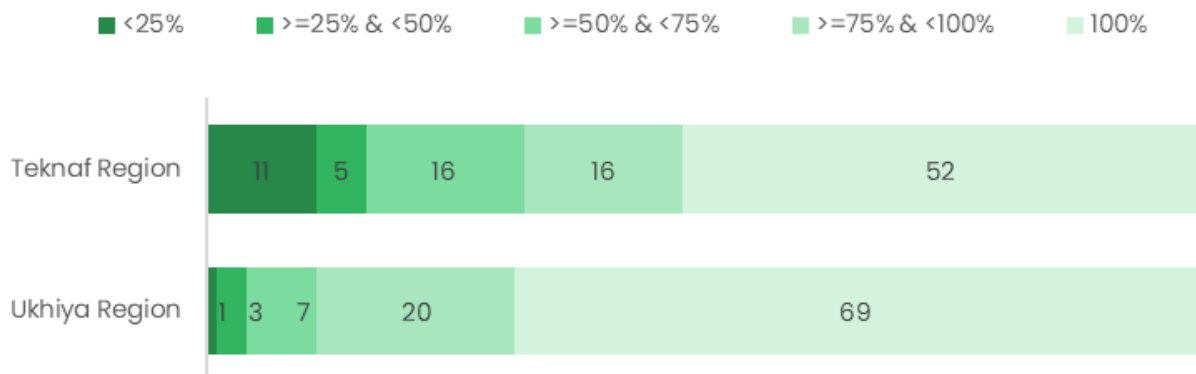
Regional disparities in resource allocation: There are notable regional disparities in the availability of MC materials, with students in Ukhiya camps having better access to textbooks compared to those in Teknaf. Ensuring equitable distribution of resources is essential for consistent educational outcomes.

Figure 7 : Regional comparative analysis of children with MC textbook in the classroom

<25%   >=25% & <50%   >=50% & <75%   >=75% & <100%   100%

Region	<25%	>=25% & <50%	>=50% & <75%	>=75% & <100%	100%
Teknaf Region	11	5	16	16	52
Ukhiya Region	1	3	7	20	69

Language barriers: Widespread use of the Chittagonian dialect in classrooms, instead of Burmese – the language of MC instruction – creates further barriers to effective learning. This underscores the need for better alignment between the language of instruction and classroom communication.

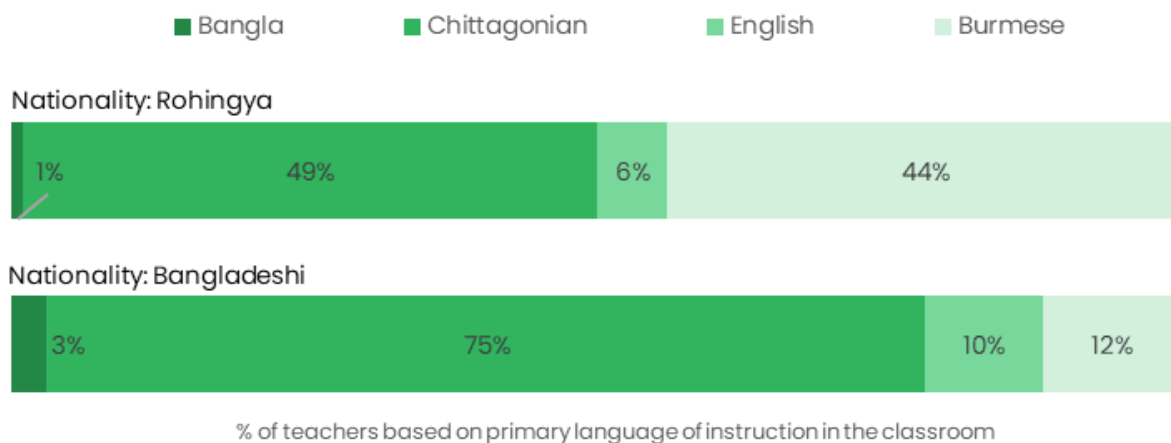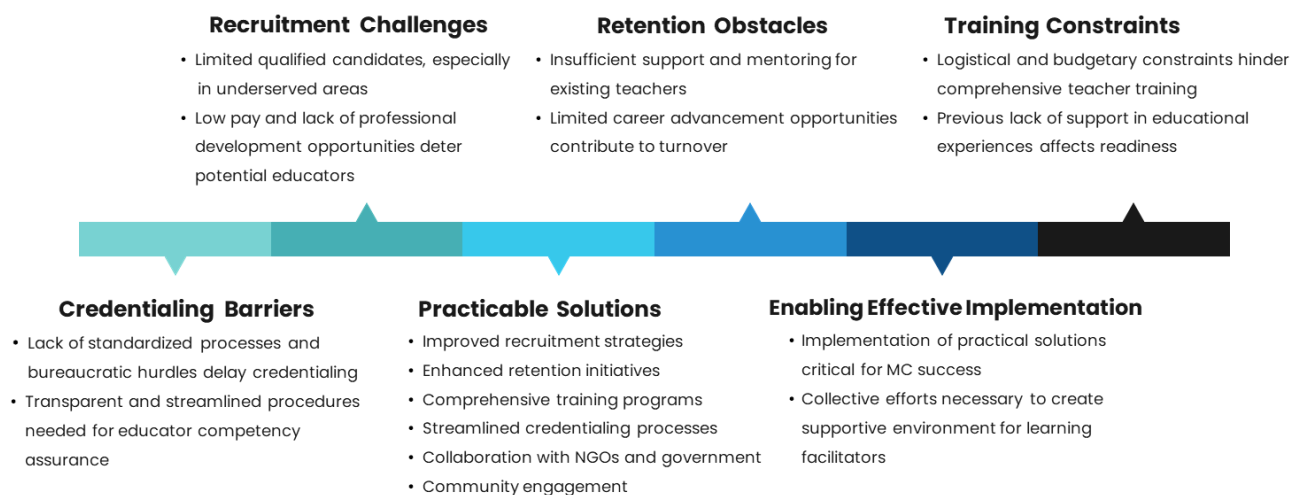**Figure 8: Classroom instruction language by teacher nationality**

■ Bangla   ■ Chittagonian   ■ English   ■ Burmese

Nationality: Rohingya

| 1% | 49% | 6% | 44% |

Nationality: Bangladeshi

| 3% | 75% | 10% | 12% |

% of teachers based on primary language of instruction in the classroom

Figure 9: Pain points in teachers' recruitment, retention, training and credentialing

Recruitment Challenges
- Limited qualified candidates, especially in underserved areas
- Low pay and lack of professional development opportunities deter potential educators

Retention Obstacles
- Insufficient support and mentoring for existing teachers
- Limited career advancement opportunities contribute to turnover

Training Constraints
- Logistical and budgetary constraints hinder comprehensive teacher training
- Previous lack of support in educational experiences affects readiness

Credentialing Barriers
- Lack of standardized processes and bureaucratic hurdles delay credentialing
- Transparent and streamlined procedures needed for educator competency assurance

Practicable Solutions
- Improved recruitment strategies
- Enhanced retention initiatives
- Comprehensive training programs
- Streamlined credentialing processes
- Collaboration with NGOs and government
- Community engagement

Enabling Effective Implementation
- Implementation of practical solutions critical for MC success
- Collective efforts necessary to create supportive environment for learning facilitators

D. Conclusion and recommendations

The implementation of the Myanmar Curriculum (MC) in Cox's Bazar refugee camps represents a significant advancement in providing quality education to Rohingya refugee children. This initiative has enabled children to access a structured curriculum that aligns with their cultural background. However, several systemic challenges persist, including a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate Burmese language proficiency and the lack of comprehensive teacher training programmes. Additionally, the misalignment between short-term humanitarian funding and long-term educational goals, coupled with infrastructure limitations, has impeded the effective delivery of education. High turnover rates and limited career advancement opportunities further exacerbate the challenges in teacher recruitment, training and retention, threatening the sustainability of educational initiatives.

Box 1. Recommendations

- **Comprehensive teacher training**
  - Cox's Bazar Education Sector, and its appealing partners should develop and implement robust teacher training programmes that enhance both subject knowledge and language proficiency.
  - Cox's Bazar Education Sector, and its appealing partners should focus on capacity building for teachers, with a particular emphasis on female educators.
  - Cox's Bazar Education Sector, its appealing partners, and the Refugee Relief & Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) should enhance the teaching monitoring system and provide training to government agencies in the Burmese language.
- **Mentorship programmes**
  - Education implementing actors should establish mentorship programmes in which experienced female teachers can guide and support new recruits.
  - Education implementing actors should foster a strong peer network to build confidence, share challenges and promote professional growth.
- **Language support**
  - Education implementing actors should introduce language support assistants within classrooms, especially in the early stages of education, to bridge the gap between the Rohingya language and Burmese.
  - Education implementing actors, such as Cox's Bazar Education Sector, and its appealing partners should establish language labs within the camps to facilitate the practice and improvement of Burmese language skills for teachers, students and administrators including Camp in Charge (CiC) and their support staff.
  - Cox's Bazar Education Sector, and its appealing partners should create and distribute bilingual or multilingual learning materials that include explanations in both Burmese and the Rohingya language (or Chittagonian dialect).
- **Long-term funding and policy alignment**
  - The Bangladesh Government, including RRRC, the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), all development and humanitarian partners, and donor agencies should advocate for the alignment of short-term humanitarian funding with long-term educational goals to ensure sustainable educational initiatives.
- **Socio-emotional learning**
  - Cox's Bazar Education Sector, its appealing partners, and education implementing actors should integrate socio-emotional learning practices among teachers and within the classroom to support the holistic development of students.

Now is the time for action. Rohingya refugee children need to be supported to enhance their access to quality education. Addressing the barriers listed in this brief will be critical in paving the way for a brighter future for affected children.