LIST OF ACRONYMS

AE: Adult education
ALC: Alternative Learning Committees
DCA: Dan Church Aid
ENA: Education Needs Assessment (REACH 2019)
FGD: Focus Group Discussions
GBV: Gender-based Violence
INEE: Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
JSMNA: Joint Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (REACH 2019)
MPWC: Multi-purpose Women’s Center
NFE: Non-formal education
PPE: Post-primary education
SDR: Secondary Desk Review
UNW: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
WGSS: Women and Girls Safe Spaces
VT: Vocational training

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Dan Church Aid (DCA) and UN Women (UNW) carried out an education needs assessment between February 26 and March 19, 2020 with the aim of understanding the priority needs for Rohingya adolescent and youth girls and women living in the refugee camps and makeshift settlements in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. The assessment sought to identify education needs and trends among young women and to develop evidence-based prioritization for a DCA/UNW project designed to provide second chance education opportunities for Rohingya adolescent girls and women.

In August 2017, targeted violence against Rohingya communities in Myanmar forced over 745,000 Rohingya people to flee into neighboring Cox’s Bazar. To date, there are an estimated 860,243 Rohingya refugees living in congested camps in the Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas of Bangladesh. While the education response, well into its third year, has made significant progress providing safe and systemic access to education opportunities, particularly to children aged 6-14, the Education Sector has identified over 500,000 Rohingya children, adolescents, and youth still in need of education services. Even more alarmingly, 83% of the adolescents and youth aged 15-24 years old do not have access to any educational activities. Access to sustained formal and non-formal education services for girls and women is further compounded by sociocultural barriers, domestic support roles, movement restrictions, and significant safety and security risks within the camps.

The needs assessment focused on further understanding the barriers to education access for adolescent and youth women and girls, their education background...
and learning goals, as well as exploring the community perceptions on the value of education for Rohingya girls and women. The assessment was implemented through the generous support of UNW partners Action Aid and BRAC who connected DCA enumerators to prominent community leaders and faith actors who supported the needs assessment in Camps 3, 4, 4 Extension, 5, and 18. Following a Secondary Data Review, the needs assessment was enacted through facility visits, focus group discussions, and surveys with female adolescents and youth, their caregivers, and broader community members.

Of particular note, the findings include:

**Education Background**
- The most reported education activity in all camps was Learning Centers for children aged 6-14 (72.4%) and the second most reported activity was Early Childhood Development for children aged 3-5 (14.9%). Non-formal education for adolescents and youth, adult education, and vocational training had very few responses; 3.7%, 1.5% and 3% respectively.
- Only 8.7% of the respondents were already involved in some sort of learning activity in their area. Of the respondents who were not involved in any activities, 50.6% of them expressed their interest in adult education, 31.1% in non-formal education for adolescents and youth and 17.1% in vocational training.
- 38% of participants came from female-headed households and more than half of the participants’ family consisted of 4-6 members.
- The mother tongue of all the participants was Rohingya. Very few (8% of total respondents) reported to speak any other language.

**Role of Education**
- Education was widely perceived as a positive, essential need for women and girls foremost because it enhanced their ability to adjust to and navigate daily life in the refugee camps.
- For women and girls, educational opportunities increased their agency because it allowed them to gain control over daily functions and contribute to economic opportunities.
- Caregivers also focused on the role education could play in child rearing (ability to teach their children themselves) while adolescents emphasized the role education could play in securing a positive future (employment, economic opportunity, career).

**Education Priorities**
- 35.3% of total respondents attended some form of primary education, 26.7% madrassa education, 2.7% secondary education and the remaining 35.3% received no formal education.
- Regardless of age and camp as variable, women expressed some experience and knowledge of tailoring, sewing, and handicraft skills. The most desired skill to learn is tailoring.
- More than 70% of the participants wanted to learn English.

**Barriers to Education for Adolescent and Youth Women and Girls**
- Respondents expressed that the main barrier for attending any educational activity was first and foremost seeking permission from family and community leaders.
- An overwhelming majority of participants preferred to attend learning sessions in the morning so they could devote their afternoons to various other work in their homes.

**Ensuring Effective Community Participation**
- Respondents emphasized the need to first ask permission to attend learning sessions and that ability to attend educational opportunities was incumbent upon engaging with male members of the family, household heads, community and religious leaders, and the broader community.

The following report outlines the methodology as well as the key findings, which will support DCA and UNW to develop interventions tailored to the needs, concerns, and resources of the Rohingya and host community populations.
In August 2017, targeted violence against Rohingya communities from Rakhine State in Myanmar forced over 745,000 Rohingya people to flee their homes into neighboring Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh resulting in one of the largest and fastest-growing refugee influxes in the world. Currently, over 850,000 Rohingya are currently residing in 34 crowded refugee settlements in Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas of Cox’s Bazar District. Despite significant progress providing assistance and services during the first two years of the humanitarian response, basic protection risks for the Rohingya community remain of grave concern.

Of the total refugee population in Cox’s Bazar, 52% are women and girls, and 54% are under the age of 18. The congested nature of the camps pose serious safety, security, and wellbeing risks, particularly for women and girls, who continue to be at disproportionate risk of gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence, forced/chid marriage, and exploitation and trafficking. The most recent Joint Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (J-MSNA) for Bangladesh indicated the most common safety concerns for girls under the age of 18 include fear of kidnapping (52%), fear of sexual violence (47%), and fear of violence within the community (31%). This report also reflects the primary factors that prevent youth and adolescents from accessing educational opportunities, specifically socio-cultural barriers (23%), marriage (36%) and domestic support roles (20%). The factors preventing adolescents and youth, particularly girls from age 12 onward, from accessing educational opportunities are closely linked to cultural practices and issues of safety.

Despite the great need, opportunities for adolescent and youth women and girls, the population most exposed to protection risks, remain fundamentally absent. Most of the education programs have targeted younger primary-aged children aged 6-14 with little consideration or investment in the developmental and protection rights and needs of young people. It is estimated that 83% of Rohingya adolescents and youth aged 15-24 years old do not have access to any educational activities. Because the Education Sector targets girls and women only up to 24 years-old, there are virtually no educational opportunities for women over age 24.

While the Education Sector has established close to 6,000 learning facilities, only 1% of those are cross-sectoral shared learning facilities such as Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) and Multi-Purpose Women Centers (MPWC) where education services are delivered in female-only spaces. The rest of the facilities are learning centers (54%) or community-based learning facilities such as madrassas or individual households where home-learning takes place in small groups (45%). Girls are unable to access meaningful education opportunities, especially those that promote foundational and portable skills and increase self-reliance. Because of the interconnected vulnerabilities of women and girls and their heightened obstacles to access education and protection services, there is an increased need for services that target these specific, cross-cutting needs.

Therefore, the aim of this assessment was two pronged:

- To understand the education needs and priorities of adolescent and youth women and girls to inform programming;
- To provide information for the Education Sector and UNW partners to further improve education and protection interventions targeted at women and girls.

4. Joint Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, REACH 2019, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zeYZ3p0Fiv0NklQ15RK_Wo7CVkRbngxC
5. Education Needs Assessment 2019 (REACH), https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FmHYnu6hXV5sNykcuFIP89jEHq49kG
6. Cox’s Bazar Education Sector Multi-Year Strategy, 2020, https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mZlX8f3jGIfYRQR2IAHLSHUbOAtpc
The needs assessment focused on five refugee camps (3, 4, 4 Extension, 5 and 18) in Ukhía Upazila where UNW operates one Multi-Purpose Women’s Center (MPWC) in each camp via implementing partners BRAC and Action Aid. The MPWCs will serve as joint protection and education facilities where DCA will implement its Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills curriculum in partnership with BRAC and Action Aid’s ongoing protection activities. The target population was women and adolescent girls (aged 15 and over).

While DCA’s programs align with the INEE Minimum Standards and Education Sector’s definition of adolescents (ages 10-19) and youth (15-24 years), the intervention was designed inclusive of women older than 24 years-old. Therefore, women aged 13-37 were included in this assessment to ensure their participation.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The needs assessment focused on five refugee camps (3, 4, 4 Extension, 5 and 18) in Ukhía Upazila where UNW operates one Multi-Purpose Women’s Center (MPWC) in each camp via implementing partners BRAC and Action Aid. The MPWCs will serve as joint protection and education facilities where DCA will implement its Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills curriculum in partnership with BRAC and Action Aid’s ongoing protection activities. The target population was women and adolescent girls (aged 15 and over).

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The needs assessment aimed to answer the following questions:
- What are the perceptions of Rohingya women and girls on the value and aims of education?
- What educational opportunities currently exist for women and girls and how do/don’t they meet their needs?
- What are the obstacles experienced by youth and adolescent women and girls accessing education?
- What skills development/income earning opportunities exist for women upon completion of educational activities?

The objectives of the assessment were achieved through the design framework that guided data collection and analysis utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods including a Secondary Data Review (SDR), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and a survey of women and girls in the catchment area. Twelve enumerators were trained in survey collection and processes for facilitating FGDs as well as the importance of gathering informed consent prior to the assessment. The survey team consisted of all female assessors to ensure that the female participants would feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues. Enumerators were responsible for interviewing respondents for the surveys and facilitating the FGDs, while DCA Team Leaders were responsible for enumerator supervision and spot-checking surveys.

Prior to the assessment, Team Leaders visited the sites to verify population and accessibility and to liaise with mahjis (community leaders) and imams (religious leaders) in the various camps who were introduced to DCA through Action Aid and BRAC partners. The community leaders and faith actors worked with the Team Leaders to explain to the broader community the purpose of the assessment. The assessment used purposive sampling through snowball technique to identify women and girls in the geographical area and in the target age range. A total of 250 women and girls participated in the assessment.

For the SDR, a systematic review of the existing literature on the country context, education system, and education and protection sectoral response to the crisis was conducted at the onset of the assessment. The secondary data review complemented the results of the field data collection in understanding background education, barriers to education, and priority learning needs for women and girls in the Rohingya refugee camps.

A total of 10 focus group discussions were conducted to explore contextual and narrative information about critical education issues facing women and girls. 2 FGDs were conducted in each of the 5 camps where UNW operates MPWCs consisting of 1) adolescent girls and 2) female caregivers and community members. The objective of the FGDs was to garner more qualitative insights into the barriers, perceptions, and goals for education services for women and girls and to allow for triangulation with the study’s quantitative component. Following data collection, DCA Team Leaders transcribed and translated the FGDs from Rohingya into English, a data analysis team was formed, and a plan was drafted to lead the analysis. FGD thematic analysis and coding of the transcriptions were carried out by the team.

For the survey, a structured template was developed and enumerators completed all data collection with encrypted smartphones and tablets using Kobo, a survey application software for mobile devices. The survey is considered moderately representative as the current sample of 150 participants allows for a 95% confidence interval with a 7.86% margin of error. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Government of Bangladesh declaration of national holiday, the data collection for the planned survey sample was interrupted. The surveys were analyzed using SPSS software to identify trends in the data. The findings, which will be shared with the participants and broader community, are categorized into thematic areas and detailed below.
Education Needs Assessment Report

Consistent with others findings, this assessment found that the majority of Rohingya adolescent and youth girls are not currently participating in educational activities and have had limited opportunities for participation in the past. Only 8.7% of the respondents reported current participation in any sort of educational activity. Of the total respondents, just 35.3% attended primary education, while 26.7% reported attending religious education (madrassa education) and only 2.7% reported attending secondary school. The remaining 35.3% received no formal education at all. Respondents, particularly adolescents in the FGDs, emphasized that post-primary education offerings in the camp for women and girls were very limited. (Figure 2)

“There is a learning center for children in our block but no learning center for adolescents. We participate in some educational activities in BRAC center. But we can’t attend regularly as our family doesn’t allow us to attend because it is far.” (adolescent, Camp 3)

When asked to identify educational activities in their area, 71% of the participants reported having an awareness of at least some education activities happening. Of those who were aware of any education activity, 72.4% identified Learning Centers (primary education), while 14.9% reported knowing about Early Childhood Development (ECD) activities. The proportion of respondents who had an awareness about post-primary education opportunities was very small. Only 3.7% reported knowing of non-formal education (NFE) activities for adolescents, only 1.5% reported knowing of opportunities for adult education (AE), and only 3% reported knowing about opportunities for vocational training (VT). (Figure 3)

Scarcity of educational activities for youth and adolescent women and girls is consistent across all camps. Camp 4E respondents reported knowing no non-formal education activities for adolescents, and about 4% reported awareness of adult education and vocational training activities each. Camp 4 had no vocational training activities, 11% reported knowing of non-formal education activities for adolescents, and about 4% reported awareness of adult education and vocational training activities each. Camp 3 had no reported activity regarding adult education and vocational training and only 5.6% reported knowing of non-formal education activities for adolescents. Camp 5 had no activities for adolescents and youth. Lastly, in Camp 18, there were no non-formal education activities for adolescents nor adult education activities reported, but 21.4% reported to have knowledge of vocational training activities.

5. KEY FINDINGS

Education Background

Consistent with others findings, this assessment found that the majority of Rohingya adolescent and youth girls are not currently participating in educational activities and have had limited opportunities for participation in the past. Only 8.7% of the respondents reported current participation in any sort of educational activity. Of the total respondents, just 35.3% attended primary education, while 26.7% reported attending religious education (madrassa education) and only 2.7% reported attending secondary school. The remaining 35.3% received no formal education at all. Respondents, particularly adolescents in the FGDs, emphasized that post-primary education offerings in the camp for women and girls were very limited. (Figure 2)
When asked about their interest in attending any of these opportunities, 50.6% expressed their interest in adult education, 31.1% expressed interest in non-formal education for adolescents, and 17.1% expressed a desire for vocational training. (Figures 4 and 5)

Camp wise and considering that respondents could choose many options: the majority of respondents from Camp 4 Extension (74.4%) reported having interest in attending adult education opportunities, followed by non-formal education opportunities (30.8%). In Camp 4 Extension no more that 3% of the total number of respondents reported having interest in vocational training. Concerning Camp 18, 92.3% of the total number of respondents reported having interest in attending vocational training and 84.6% reported having interest in attending adult education. The percentage of respondents from Camp 3 and 4 reporting having interest in NFE and AE was very similar, around 70% for NFE and 60 -75% for AE. In Camp 3 none of the respondents reported having interest in VT but in Camp 4, 20.5% did. Finally, in Camp 5 all respondents reported having interest in AE, followed by 58.3% of respondents reporting having interest in VT and 16.7% in NFE.

Role of Education

Education was widely perceived as a positive, essential need for women and girls foremost because it enhanced their ability to adjust to and navigate daily life in the refugee camps. For women and girls, educational opportunities increased their agency because it allowed them to gain control over daily functions. Caregivers also focused on the role education could play in child rearing (ability to teach their children themselves) while adolescents emphasized the role education could play in securing a positive future (employment, economic opportunity, career). However, the fundamental value both groups placed on the role of education was how it helped them manage everyday life and challenges in the camps. For example, it allowed them to identify addresses, read camps signs, sign their names, understand dates and calendars for distributions, and count money accurately in order to pay for goods and services.

“If educated, we will be able to read signboards and find our family and address if we are lost.” (ADOLESCENT, CAMP 4E)

“Being educated can help us to recognize calendar and dates, this way we can easily collect our ration, gas, and other important things on the due date.” (CAREGIVER, CAMP 4E)

“Education is important for women and girls…it can help get jobs, become teachers, doctors, or nurses.” (ADOLESCENT, CAMP 4E)

Education Priorities

Literacy

Education was seen as critical to women and girls because it provided skills needed for daily living. This greatly influenced the desires for learning different competencies. Across all the different camps, participants expressed a strong interest in learning basic English reading and writing because of the common use...
of signs in English around the camps. This was further emphasized through the survey results as 70% of respondents prioritized wanting to learn English above all other languages. The proportion of participants who wanted to learn English was higher among those who received either primary, secondary, or no formal education over those who reported attending madrassas. Similarly, the proportion who wanted to learn English was higher among younger participants rather than older ones. Language proficiency, particularly in English, was seen as a key driver of successful camp orientation.

“There are many signs of direction in English everywhere in the camp, if we know English very well, it would help us to move easily from one place to another.” (CAREGIVER, CAMP 4)

Numeracy
Developing numeracy skills was perceived as essential to helping women and girls manage personal finances and track household expenditures, although the concept of learning numeracy was new for many. The survey found 36% of total respondents were unfamiliar with numeracy. In Camp 3, 4 Extension and 5, this proportion was higher (65%, 44.4%, and 38.9% respectively). Respondents associated the ability to count with the ability to generate an income. Furthermore, knowing numbers was seen as valuable for using mobile phones. As with literacy skills, participants considered developing numeracy skills as a part of a basic set of knowledge and understandings that would enable them to better confront their extreme situations.

“If anyone knows how to count, while sewing dresses, she can measure the cloth properly and sew it beautifully using a machine and that way she can earn money.” (CAREGIVER, CAMP 3)

Life Skills
Life skills activities were identified as the most available type of learning session and over half the survey respondents had participated in some sort of life skills sessions. Awareness sessions on health and hygiene related topics were reported as the most frequent. Additionally, the following life skill activities were found to be already running in surveyed camps: hygiene awareness sessions (hand washing, personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene management), social awareness sessions (prevention of early/forced marriage, human trafficking, childcare and parenting, child labor, child abuse, and GBV), nutrition awareness sessions, and recreational activities.

Respondents expressed more interest in participating in life skills sessions that they considered life-saving such as health and hygiene-related topics whereas life skills sessions designed to support personal development and wellbeing such as decision-making and emotional learning were considered less important.

“Life skills are very important because we can stay clean and keep ourselves away from disease.” (ADOLESCENT CAMP 4E)

Skills Development
In the Rohingya camps, women hold three main
categories of occupations: domestic work, agriculture, and community work (UNHCR 2019). Recently the Government of Bangladesh agreed to formally introduce the Myanmar curriculum, which included a provision for skills development training that would enable the Rohingya community to acquire skills that would prepare them for a dignified return to Myanmar. It is likely government approval of skills development training will lead to a shift in the opportunities available for women and girls. Currently, the women survey mentioned the following skills development categories that were currently running in the camps: Sewing (tailoring and dress making, stitching, and embroidery), handicraft (bags, prayer caps, beaded ornaments, block batik, fabric art), and income-generating activities such as making snacks and doing make-up. Respondents said they wanted to learn tailoring, as it was a vehicle for economic empowerment. Many adolescents mentioned in the FGDs that their families encouraged them to prioritize acquiring tailoring skills rather than attending educational activities as it was more likely to secure an income. Of the women and girls surveyed, only 8.7% of them reported to being involved in some sort of skills development training. When asked which skills they would like to learn, respondents overwhelmingly wanted to learn tailoring. (Figure 6)

Barriers to Education for Adolescent and Youth Women and Girls
Respondents expressed manifold challenges to their participation in education activities, mainly related to cultural gender norms that create obstacles at the family and community level as well as a lack of age and developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that are safe to access.

Culturally-related gender norms
Respondents reported that educational opportunities for women and girls coincide with the timing of the relief collection and distribution. As most of the male members go out during day, women therefore are obliged to stay at home and await the distribution of tokens. The most reported barrier to accessing educational activities regularly was seeking permission from the community/majhi/household head. (48.2%). Respondents emphasized that in order to regularly participate in sessions, they would need support advocating with family members to allow their participation.

“Most of the women don’t get permission from their husband for accessing educational opportunities because people from different organizations come to their house in different times to distribute token of different supplies. If there is no one in the house, they won’t be able to collect the tokens.”
(COMMUNITY MEMBER, CAMP 4E)

“My stepmother does not allow me to go out and take part in learning sessions as I need to do the household work.”
(adolescent, camp 18)

Furthermore, women and girls assume the caregiving responsibilities, and lack of childcare often precludes them from participating. 21.4% of the participants
expressed that if there was no child care, either for their own children or siblings they were tasked with watching, they would not be allowed to attend educational sessions. Finally, 16.4% of the respondents reported needing appropriate clothing in order to go outside to participate in the sessions. (Figure 7)

"Because of having little children, most of the Rohingya women can't get permission from their husbands to go out of the home to access educational opportunities." (CAREGIVER, CAMP 3)

Respondents also spoke about safety and security issues they experience when walking to facilities and the onslaught of Eve teasing they are subjected to. Adolescent girls from all the camps reported Eve teasing by men and boys as a major security concern that hinders their safe commute and participation in learning opportunities. Adolescents also expressed that their movements are further restricted during the days of menstruation.

Across all camps, marriage was highlighted as the best alternative for girls as it alleviated their economic burden on their family and served as a protective factor from other threats within the community. For many respondents, if girls were allowed to participate in education opportunities, it was seen as jeopardizing suitable marriage prospects.

"If any single girl goes to learn at NGO centers, people of her society criticize her character, and because of this trouble will arise during her marriage." (COMMUNITY MEMBER, CAMP 3)

Availability of safe and relevant learning opportunities
Adolescent participants in the FGDs were particularly vocal about lack of educational opportunities for girls their age, as well as the social insecurity and religious restrictions that accompany wanting to attend learning sessions. 60% of the total population surveyed said there were no safe places for females in their area. This gap was wider in Camps 5 and 18, where more than 90% and 80% of participants respectively reported no knowledge of safe spaces designated for women.

"Our families don’t support education at our age, because there is no specific schools or classes for us in our block." (ADOLESCENT, CAMP 4E)

They highlighted the zero-sum game they experience accessing educational opportunities because even if there existed activities, the challenges they encounter accessing those opportunities are perceived as socially and religiously prohibitive. These findings complement existing reports that highlight the need for safe and secure access to mitigate the threats Rohingya women and girls receive en route to facilities.

"There’s an NGO learning center but it is far from our house. We feel insecure to go and attend there on a regular basis." (ADOLESCENT, CAMP 18)
Ensuring Effective Community Participation

Across all camps and irrespective of age, the participants reported seeking permission from household heads as the area where they would need the most support in order to participate in any educational activities. Respondents expressed the need for sensitization and awareness raising at community and family level and expressed hope that if NGO representatives speak with the mahjis who then speak with family members about the importance of education, their family members would be persuaded to grant them permission to attend sessions. In the FGDs, the participants spoke emphatically of the integral role mahjis and religious leaders play in their ability to participate in education activities.

Furthermore, ensuring that women and girls have a gender-segregated, safe space to learn is critical in expanding education opportunities. Respondents expressed the need for learning to happen in close proximity to their houses or that alternative solutions are sought to mitigate the harassment and Eve teasing they receive when walking.

Additionally, the need for community organizations to support and advocate for education for women and girls is needed. Only 10% of the total participants said they know of the existence of any committees supporting education activities. Because local and religious leaders play such a significant role in promoting education programs, the need to enroll their support in ensuring positive community engagement and participation is essential to implementing effective interventions for women and girls.
Role of Education

1. Education was seen by respondents as key for managing their daily lives in exile and creating pathways for improved livelihoods. Therefore, the basic core of any non-formal education package for youth and adolescent women and girls should be designed in an integrative way to include:
   - support for participants’ personal development to cope with daily life in the camps
   - provision of skills development opportunities that enhance women and girls’ access to income-generating activities.

2. Education and training interventions for adolescent and youth women and girls should explore exposing them to skills development opportunities beyond traditional gender roles and tasks.

3. Learning a foreign language, particularly English, is perceived by the respondents as a window for new opportunities, especially related to income generation. However, it is crucial that education programs ensure the language of instruction for female youth and adolescents is needs-based. All education programs should above all foster social cohesion and prevent and/or mitigate social tensions.

Education Priorities

4. Respondents overwhelmingly reported little to no formal education. Because of low levels of education attainment, programs should scaffold learning to meet the levels of the learners. Therefore, it is recommended that programs begin with foundational literacy and numeracy classes in a non-formal setting. Furthermore, the development of literacy and numeracy sessions should be integrated with language learning into one simultaneous process. DCA’s literacy and numeracy curriculum in English and Burmese designed for learners with limited formal education is well-equipped to provide such lessons.

5. The fact that respondents have not characterized certain life skills focusing on emotional learning as an educational priority can be related to the fact that they have not experienced these types of learning sessions and therefore are unaware of what they would entail. Education programs should ensure that rights holders experience a wide range of learning and life skills opportunities (e.g. decision-making, critical thinking, conflict resolution, etc.) to promote both physical and socio-emotional wellbeing.

6. Very few opportunities and safe spaces for adolescent and youth women and girls exist, and those that do are very limited in scope. While there have been strides providing GBV and health-related services to women and girls, there were no reported programs that also
integrate the teaching and learning of foundational literacy and numeracy in a systematic way using a prescribed curriculum and under the guidance of the Education Sector. It is recommended to integrate education programming further into existing protection and GBV programs and to conduct activities through the use of cross-sector shared facilities such as MPWCs. Providing education services in existing structures is the best way to reach vulnerable women and girls without using additional space while also increasing cross sectoral coordination.

7. Interventions that work with women and girls should consider incorporating ECD and parenting guidance into program design.

Overcoming Barriers and Ensuring Effective Community Participation

8. Seeking permission from household heads (both male and female-headed households) was the area where women and girls would need the most support in order to participate in any educational activities. Therefore, any program aiming to work with women and girls must also address these issues of permission and community awareness. Community participation and engagement is critical in the delivery of gender-sensitive and contextually relevant education.

- Programs should mobilize mahjis, imams, and other community and religious leaders to sensitize household heads on the added value of education for women and girls. Respondents emphasized a two-step approach they considered necessary: first, engage the community and religious leaders; and second, ask those leaders to speak with household heads. Respondents felt that without following this sequence, participation would not be feasible. It is recommended, then, to first enroll the support of community and religious leaders to then advocate for education for women and girls at the household level.

9. Most of the respondents reported preferring home based learning. Aspects like the need for appropriate clothing, safety concerns while walking to the facilities, and seeking permission from family and community leaders to attend learning sessions were highlighted as reasons why learners prefer to study in their households. However, presenting a balance of learning modalities such as classes at the MPWCs as well as home-based learning would allow education stakeholders to build rapport with key decision makers at the community and household level.

10. One of the biggest steps toward increasing access to educational opportunities for women and girls is ensuring that learning facilities such as the MPWCs are considered safe and conducive by their families and broader communities. Because distance and safety are such a major deterrent to education for women and girls, programs must also ensure that the way to and back from the spaces are safe. To do that, programs should work to raise awareness of the opportunities and services MPWCs provide while mobilizing community action to protect girls on the way to the safe spaces.

- Programs can advocate for the establishment of male and female Alternative Learning Committees (ALCs) comprised of community members who live around the MPWCs. These committees will work to change perceptions about girls’ education and develop solutions to mitigate the safety and security concerns for girls and women to access opportunities. ALCs will ensure community ownership and sustainability of initiatives.