



Community of Practice (CoP)

Education in
Rohingya Camps

Community of Practice (CoP) on Education in Rohingya Camps

On 7 November 2022, in partnership with UNHCR and BRAC Institute of Education and Development (BIED) BRAC facilitated the first Community of Practice (CoP) session on “Education in Rohingya Camps” at BRAC Centre Conference Room, 75 Mohakhali, Dhaka.

This event aimed to discuss the learnings, challenges, opportunities and good practices in providing education to Rohingya children in Bangladesh. Selected four research papers were presented at the event, followed by a panel discussion on the subject.

- i. Education for Rohingya Children in Bangladesh: A Critical Evaluation of the Prospects and Challenges of the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot- By Md. Shamsud Douza, Additional RRRC &

Md. Mahmudul Hoque, Senior Assistant Secretary, Government of Bangladesh

- ii. No, we are not allowed: Barriers to Rohingya refugees’ educational and economic opportunities - By Dr Khadija Mitu, Professor of Anthropology, Chittagong University
- iii. Education for a ‘lost generation’: A way out for the survival of Rohingya children in Bangladesh, By Dr M. Ala Uddin, Professor of Anthropology, Chittagong University
- iv. Effectiveness of *Pashe Achhi* Tele-communication Model in Rohingya Humanitarian Camps during the COVID-19 Pandemic - By Sakila Yesmin, Taslima Begum and Kuri Chisim, BRAC IED



(From left) Dr Helal Mohiuddin, professor of political science and sociology, North South University, John Ekaju, education manager, UNICEF Bangladesh, Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director, Campaign for Popular Education, KAM Morshed, senior director, BRAC, Dr Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus, BRAC University, and Brig Gen Ilyas Iftekhar Rasul, director and head of education, Friendship, taking part in the panel discussion at the session.

Guests and participants from relevant government agencies, UN agencies, NGOs, and research and academic organisations participated in the event.



Moderated by KAM Morshed, senior director, BRAC, the event was attended by Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Dr

Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus, BRAC University, Dr Helal Mohiuddin, professor of political science and sociology, North South University, John Ekaju, education manager, UNICEF Bangladesh, among others.

KAM Morshed, in his welcome speech, noted that this journey of Community of Practice (CoP) started at the end of 2018. The purpose was to have a platform for facilitating quality research. Agencies were doing numerous types of research on Rohingya issues, but there had been a lack of sharing and learning of research findings among agencies. Consequently, due to such a lack of harmonisation, research topics were repeated. Participant organisations got busy responding to Covid-19 in 2020 and 2021; thus, the research activities of CoP slowed down. The research theme of the first CoP is “Education in Rohingya Camps”, and the next CoP will be based on the theme “Livelihoods”.



Johannes van der Klaauw, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh, in his inaugural speech, noted, “Let’s not forget that in continuing to serve the Rohingya population, we are entering a very

challenging period where the funding and support from the international community are more fragile than it used to be. We need to prioritise; we need to know the minimums that

need to be done. We need to continue at least to keep education available to all students.” He emphasised that the CoP as a platform is essential because humanitarian agencies can exchange knowledge and experience and help craft advocacy agendas and targeted operation interventions.

Presentation of the research papers

Additional Commissioner of RRRC

Md Shamsud Douza

emphasised in his presentation that the government's ultimate goal is to repatriate them; thus, Rohingya children need to receive education following the Myanmar curriculum. He pointed out that 52 per cent of the Rohingya population are children, among whom 36 per cent are school-going. There are 6,000 learning facilities being run by the government of Bangladesh in partnership with UNICEF. Among them, 3,000 are home-based as many parents are not interested in sending their girl children to learning facilities.



- **Nearly a million FDMNs residing in 34 camps**
- **36% school-going children (aged 5-17)**
- **5,478 learning facilities**
- **Learning Competency Framework Approach (LCFA)**



In her presentation, Dr Khadija Mitu, professor of anthropology, Chittagong University highlighted that a package of gender transformative interventions targeting families, and religious

and community leaders should promote the importance of girls' education, including vocational training and highlight the negative consequences of early marriage.



We don't have any mobile phone or television. (17-year-old married girl)

How can I use [the internet] when I've no money? [Just] having food is too hard now. (17-year-old boy)



Dr M. Ala Uddin, professor of anthropology, Chittagong University, emphasised that shelter is meaningful when education is offered. He stressed not having access to formal

education, crowded learning space, qualification of teachers and so on. He also said that examples from other refugee camps show that educated refugees can contribute to both the host country and the home country. He suggested that the young Rohingya children could be transformed from burdens to assets by providing education.

BRAC IED researchers detailed '*Pashe Achhi* (Beside You, if translated in English),' a remote learning mechanism developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to stay connected with the Rohingya children and their caregivers. In addition, the model addresses caregivers' and children's well-being as well as the learning and development of children. The modality consists of PSS support and plays facilitators who provide psychosocial

support to caregivers and engage with children through playful approaches for one year; The intervention duration was from July 2020 to March 2021.

Open discussion and Q&A

The session, moderated by KAM Morshed, senior director, BRAC, offered insightful discussion attracting questions, comments and opinions of the participants and further explanation by the presenters of the papers.

Representatives of local NGOs in Cox's Bazar highlighted the importance of integrating Maktab (mosque-based learning centre) with the learning centres in the camps.

Cultural tools are found to be helpful in the local context; thus, it is suggested to apply extra-curricular activities engaging children, adolescents and youth in the learning centres besides education programmes.

Internet usage is restricted, and mobile networks are inefficient in the camps; thus, how does this affect the project relies on internet usage? Another pressing question was how gender-focused pedagogy could be scaled up across the Rohingya camps and the country.

The cop is a gathering of practitioners to share insights and experiences of agencies on the ground. Hence, the first CoP focuses on such sharing among participants. The scope for policy recommendations is limited at the moment, but in future, it could be planned with the presence of decision-makers as panellists. There is a somewhat accountability mechanism, but that is probably not enough. We must understand that development and crisis mitigation are two different modus operandi. In the initial stage, the Rohingya response was to address the immediate need to resolve the humanitarian crisis. After five years, it appears to shift towards more development interventions.

Every learning centre has one teacher; to increase these centres' efficiency and create employment opportunities, supervisors could be recruited from host communities to monitor activities in these learning centres.

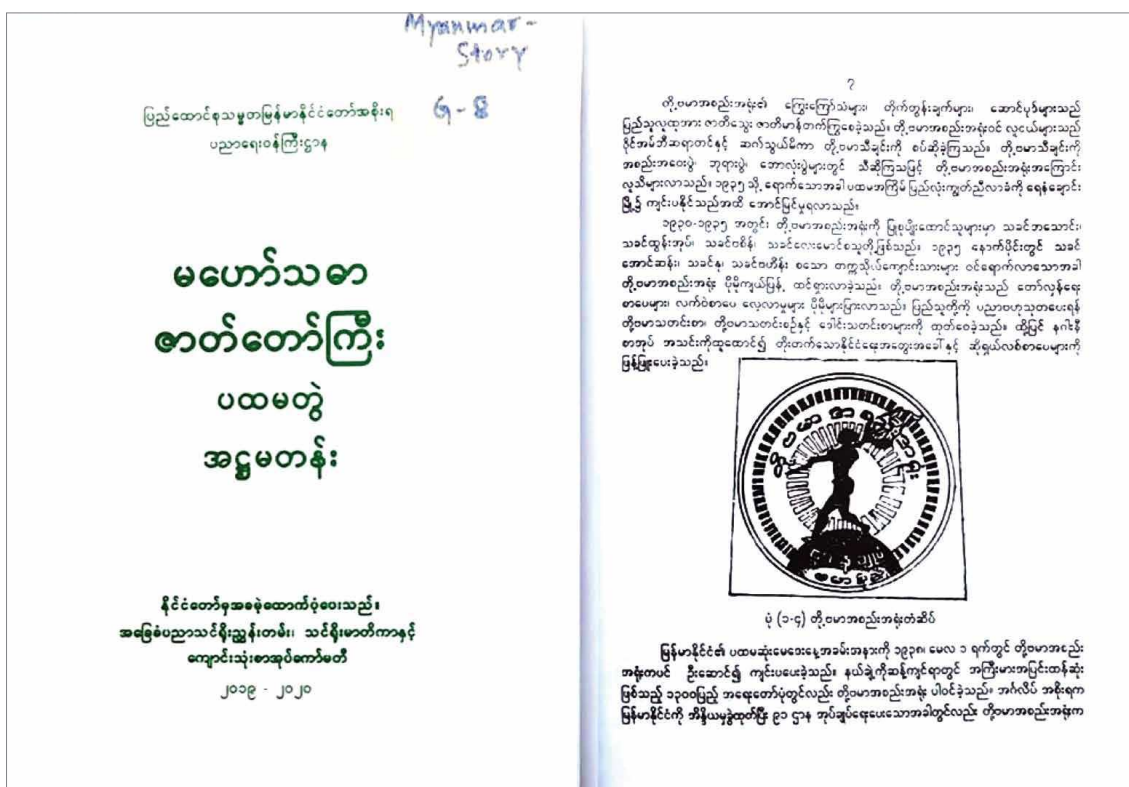
Hafizi and Maktabas are non-formal education, and these centres are not registered. There is a dilemma around gender transformation; preaching to adolescent girls by visiting households is too expensive. Homeschooling is costly; agencies do not have the resources to facilitate such an approach. Skill-based training connecting education may work; some good examples of the centres for adolescents show that such an approach could be helpful.

It is suggested that community radio could be an effective medium through which girls could receive lessons on skill-based training and awareness messages. It is also noted that essentially there is informal education in the learning centres; once the formal education system starts, then the critical assessment would be needed.

In response to a question, a presenter noted that the entire model did evolve based on social responsibility and what programme participants want on the ground. After such need analysis, the psycho-social counselling session was designed. Initially, the internet was not good; later, RRRC permitted internet use, and then again, there was a restriction on internet usage. The project adapted changes and shifted from telephone or internet to home visit mode.

In response to a question about the similarities and conformities of all the Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners, a presenter noted that many organisations have ECD there. Core values change from organisation to organisation. ECD working groups are in place, all under one umbrella. BRAC's ECD centre and its contents have a vibrating atmosphere reflecting Rohingya culture.

There are learning centres, and children after five years can access these centres. Children under five can access Child-Friendly Centres (CFS) and integrated nutrition centres. And after five years, there is a prospect that ECD will be incorporated into the Joint Response Plan (JRP).



A lesson in Burmese language; taught in grade 8 at the Rohingya camp learning centres.

Concerning gender transformative response, it is necessary to know further which model best fits the girls' education, whether learning centre, home-based learning, or other approaches. Qualified women teachers attract girls to attend learning centres, and parents also allow their daughters.

Presenters made it clear, answering questions in the open discussion, that the Myanmar curriculum contains the same contents and books that are being taught in the schools in Myanmar.

It is proposed to have a common repository where all participating agencies of CoP could store research and data on Rohingya issues.

Panel discussion

It is reflected from all the discussions that various interventions have been undertaken to facilitate education for children, adolescents and youth. The panel discussion instigated what further initiatives could be taken in the future, whether the existing education services are enough, and what are the most significant gaps in the service provisions.

Brig. Gen (Rtd) Ilyas Iftekhar Rasul, ndc, psc, senior director and head of education sector, Friendship, shed light on the organisation's initiatives in the camps. Friendship has been working in the Rohingya camps since 2018 providing education programmes. Initially, there have been stress recovery periods, and learning centres and children-friendly spaces meet this initial purpose. It is observed that children are interested to learn in these centres, and this space also works as breathing space for them. Children in their homes experience boredom and monotony. Before the introduction of the Myanmar curriculum, the contents of learning centres were not much inclined to formal education of adolescents and youth groups. Hence, the learning centres having Myanmar curricula are now attracting adolescent and youth groups. The education sector is now very structured, and UNICEF also supports it. Language is a significant challenge in facilitating education in the camps. Only one instructor was recruited

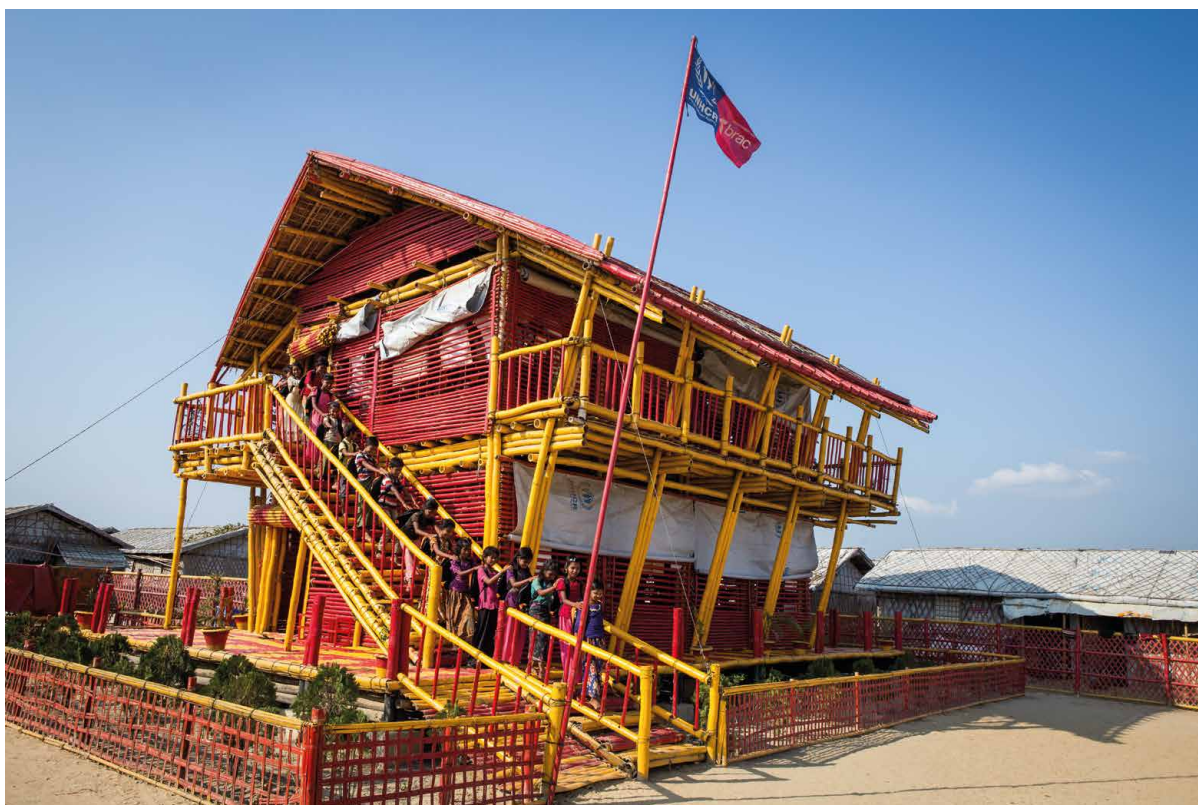
from the host community under the Myanmar curriculum, and other instructors were recruited from Rohingyas in the camp. According to guidelines, instructors should have minimum secondary education (SSC and HSC). Only a handful of Rohingyas have SSC or HSC level education, but they do not have certificates with them; thus, a test mechanism is required. Supervisors are Bangladeshi, and due to the language barrier, they cannot monitor the instructors' quality of teaching and content. Basic training in Myanmar language skills for the supervisors is required to overcome this challenge.

Friendship is having a dialogue with UNICEF about how to facilitate such training. There is also a scarcity of qualified instructors to teach students from grades 6 to 9; hence lessons under the Myanmar curriculum could be recorded by a qualified instructor in a studio, and these recorded copies could be circulated in the learning centres. The learning centres could play these recorded versions using solar-powered computers and monitors. Friendship has already found this method very useful in the chars of Gaibandha and Kurigram.

Although plenty of money is spent on constructing learning centres made of bamboo, these are still susceptible to weather and landslides. A semi-permanent structure of learning centres would be helpful. The Rohingya community needs leadership; thus, Rohingya youth should also get opportunities for higher studies. Rohingya boys and girls need access to tertiary education to develop leadership and guide their communities.

There is a dilemma that if Rohingya youth access higher education, they will be taking the jobs of the Bangladeshis youth. How to overcome such a dilemma?

Dr Helal Mohiuddin, professor of Political Science and Sociology, North South University, noted that Rohingya refugees do not have leadership, which is a critical problem. The simple answer is we need to build leadership there. A transformative education system will be required. More



Child Friendly Space. Students at two-storey learning centre-32, camp 4. UNHCR. Copyright BRAC 15-01-2020

female adolescent-centric programmes are needed. Boys are deprived and have the perception that girls are getting all the attention from humanitarian agencies. And boys are increasingly inclined towards harmful activities and antisocial behaviours. We need to address this besides the political economy.

John Ekaju, education manager, UNICEF Bangladesh, noted that UNICEF would take the learning of the CoP to the practice level. He said we are moving towards a challenging time as the fund is diminishing

because of competing priorities globally. It is also good that RRRC participated as a presenter in the CoP. The purpose of evidence is to translate evidence into action. We need to put this learning into practice to create an impact immediately. Bangladesh has tremendous pressure to have a Myanmar curriculum in practice. Some countries have refugees attending examinations of host countries. Not one size fits all. Arrangements should be made so that refugees can get certification from the Myanmar education system. Multiple strategies could be applied here for the certification.

As a signatory of the UN charter, Bangladesh has to take some steps, but there is an issue with recognition and certification. How Rohingya education and discourse should change?



Dr Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus, BRAC Institute of Education and Development, BRAC University, noted that the geo-political context is constrained. Government is in a difficult situation as there is no end to it; it is a dilemma. Why is it being called non-formal education? The idea of non-formal education was introduced in the 1970s (by Philip H. Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed) to extend and broaden educational opportunities, not to restrict them. There is a geo-political and humanitarian problem in how this situation will evolve. Refugees are in trouble; similarly, Bangladesh's whole society is stressed. Violence, drug trafficking, and crime are on the rise. It is not wise to keep young children deprived of education for a long time.

Proper education for these children is needed. Proper education should not be limited, whatever geo-political situation arises. Government and international communities need to work on this. Giving the proper youth schooling will not be easy. At least opportunities for regular education should be open for young children. We also need to inquire whether the Myanmar language is appropriate for Rohingyas. Some pedagogical decisions should be taken, such as bilingual approach, teachers, learning materials, technology, etc. There is an obligation under

the Convention on the Rights of the Children to provide access to education. Challenges cannot be undermined, but proper education can solve many problems in the camps by reducing crime and social, economic, and emotional difficulties and sustaining peace. Resources would be a challenge; thus, there is a need to generate more resources for education.

Concluding remarks

Regarding reflection on the papers and way forward for the policymakers and implementers, the chief discussant at the event Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of CAMPE said: *"We don't know if the Myanmar curriculum is gender sensitive. We have to see that as well. Education must not be deprioritised, be it any situation. Safe and successful repatriation is very much of a political agenda."* She said, *"Cox's Bazar is one of the most ecologically sensitive areas in the world. Pumping funds is not going to solve our problem. Is the fund reaching the right people at the right time? Bangladesh is suffering with its economy, and the Russia-Ukraine war is there. But education cannot be deprioritised."*

This Community of Practice as a platform is essential for the development agencies and practitioners to contribute to change, research, experience, knowledge and advocacy. The platform uses evidence gathered to design a more practical education programme. As a platform, it needs to share information among humanitarian actors. Learning from the experimental practices concerning education in Rohingya camps helps further improve the programmatic interventions' efficacy.

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