



Report

# Strengthening coordinated education planning and response in crises

## Bangladesh case study

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Cover photo: A woman teaching in Bangladesh. Credit: UNICEF.

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The case study series is led by Susan Nicolai. The authors of this report are Arran Magee and Vidya Diwakar.

The findings of this report are entirely those of the authors and do not reflect the positions or policies of ECW, the Global Education Cluster, UNHCR or the INEE.

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# Acronyms

<b>BRAC</b>	Building Resources Across Communities
<b>CAMPE</b>	Campaign for Popular Education
<b>CiC</b>	Camp-in-Charge official
<b>CODEC</b>	Community Development Centre
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DAM</b>	Dhaka Ahsania Mission
<b>DC</b>	Deputy Commissioner
<b>DCA</b>	DanChurchAid
<b>DFID</b>	UK Department for International Development
<b>DPEO</b>	District Primary Education Office
<b>ECW</b>	Education Cannot Wait
<b>EiE</b>	education in emergencies
<b>ELCG</b>	Education Local Consultative Group
<b>FGD</b>	focus group discussion
<b>FSDF</b>	Foundational Skills Development Framework
<b>GEC</b>	Global Education Cluster
<b>GoB</b>	Government of Bangladesh
<b>HoSOG</b>	Heads of Sub-Office Group
<b>IM</b>	information manager
<b>INEE</b>	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
<b>INGO</b>	international non-governmental organisation
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISCG</b>	Inter-Sector Coordination Group
<b>JRP</b>	Joint Response Plan
<b>KI</b>	key informant
<b>KII</b>	key informant interview
<b>LCFA</b>	Learning Competency Framework and Approach
<b>LCMC</b>	Learning Centre Management Committee
<b>MoDMR</b>	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoMPE</b>	Ministry of Mass and Primary Education
<b>MoU</b>	memorandum of understanding
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>NNGO</b>	national non-governmental organisation
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>NTF</b>	National Task Force

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<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>RISDA</b>	Resource Integration and Social Development Association
<b>RRRC</b>	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner
<b>SCI</b>	Save the Children International
<b>SEG</b>	Strategic Executive Group
<b>SOHS</b>	State of the Humanitarian System
<b>TWIG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>UNHCR</b>	UN Refugee Agency
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VSO</b>	Voluntary Service Overseas

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# Executive summary

This case study examines how, in Bangladesh, humanitarian and development actors can more effectively coordinate planning and response to strengthen education outcomes for children and young people affected by crises. The research looks at the ‘who’, the ‘how’ and the ‘so what’ of coordination of education in emergencies (EiE) and protracted crises related to the Rohingya response in Bangladesh, resulting in recommendations for action that can be taken by different types of stakeholders, including the ECW and key partners, across different contexts.

The crisis escalated in August 2017, when targeted violence against Rohingya communities from Rakhine State in Myanmar forced over 745,000 Rohingya people, including over 400,000 children, to flee their homes into neighbouring Cox’s Bazar, resulting in one of the fastest-growing refugee crises in the world. While the UN system refers to the population as Rohingya refugees, in keeping with the applicable international framework, the Government of Bangladesh referred to the Rohingya as ‘forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals’ (SEG, 2019).<sup>1</sup> This absence of clearly recognised legal status had significant consequences for their education, as it was accompanied by the subsequent decision to curtail Rohingya children’s access to the national curriculum or the Bangla language as a medium of instruction.

## Who coordinates country-level education in emergencies and protracted crises?

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) leads on responses for Rohingya refugees. Country-wide coordination is led from Dhaka by the National Task Force (NTF) and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR),

the latter for operational delivery, although the influx of refugees in 2017 required more robust coordination of the operation, and was led by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) under the MoDMR. An education cluster in Dhaka (although not officially activated as a cluster), co-led by Save the Children (SCI) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), has long served coordination of partners during emergencies and continues to serve partners in-country today.

In August 2017, the GoB began to allow the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) a larger role in the response. This resulted in a Strategic Executive Group (SEG), co-chaired by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Chief of Mission, the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNHCR country representative, who act as the lead agency over the existing Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). The response is coordinated in collaboration with the RRRC, the Deputy Commissioner and relevant line ministries, and also includes responding humanitarian actors, United Nations agencies, national and international non-governmental organisations (NNGOs and INGOS), donors and other stakeholders.

## How can coordination of education planning and response be made more effective?

This study looked at the enabling and constraining factors for coordination, framed by four factors known as the Faerman factors (Faerman et al., 2001; ODI, 2020). These factors appear in organisational research relating to the success or failure of inter-organisational coordinated efforts, and

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1 In this document, the term refugee is used to refer to both.

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which we use in our analysis to understand the enabling factors and constraints for coordination in Cox's Bazar: predisposition; incentives; leadership; and equity.

This frame was applied by Nolte et al. (2012) to analyse the collaborative networks that operated during the disaster response in Haiti in 2010 (Nolte et al., 2012; Faerman et al., 2001).

In the present analysis:

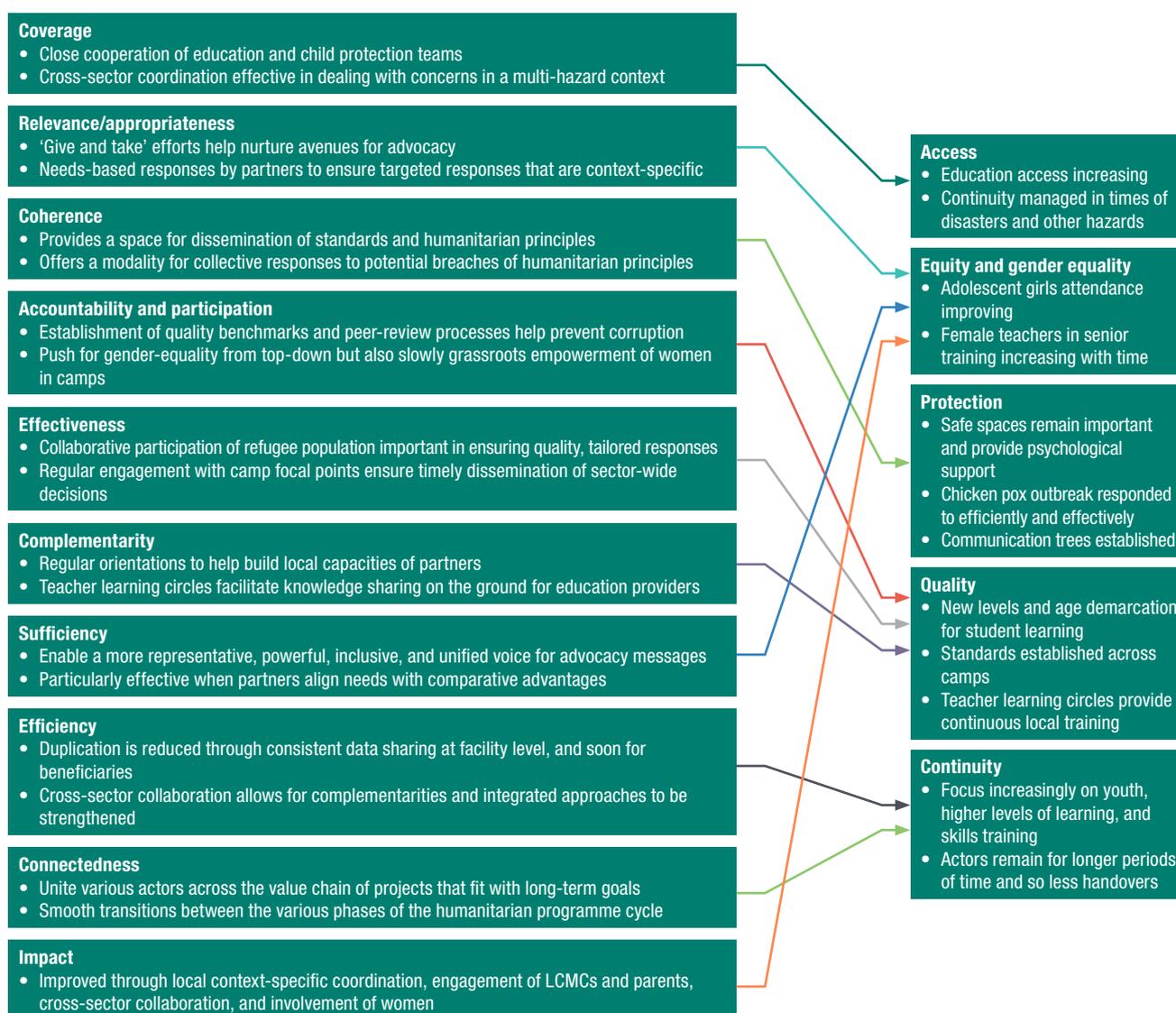
- **Predispositions.** While the government and – upon invitation – UNHCR lead the response in refugee contexts, the GoB's decision to not recognise the vast majority of Rohingya as refugees led to a situation where UNHCR was not initially invited to lead the overall refugee response. Subsequently, there appeared to be a lack of the common understanding that can be gained from systems grounded in mandates, MoUs and other advance agreements. However, this has also created an opportunity to question some of the broader normative frameworks that enable humanitarian and development actors in crisis contexts to work together.
- **Incentives.** There were various issues around education coordination mechanisms, such as junior staff being sent in place of decision-makers, mixed experience across partners that slowed down or sped up the meetings, making them hard to follow, or a general lack of key learning points to take away. However, the education sector coordination mechanism also fostered positive aspects, such as processes to standardise practices, access to funding sources that would be out of reach for smaller organisations, training opportunities and networking with other organisations.

- **Leadership.** The hybrid system of coordination in Bangladesh created tensions between individuals over issues like unclear roles and responsibilities, competition over leadership roles or reluctance to relinquish areas felt to traditionally be the responsibility of one individual or another. However, sector trainings helped nurture collaborative relationship building. For example, sector trainings with camp focal points (put forward by NGOs working in the camps), using role play to highlight different ways to act as advocates for education without confrontation, were perceived as making a significant difference, with participants deploying the skills developed in their focal point meetings.
- **Equity.** At the onset of the crisis, limited space for programming led to confusion over who should be prioritised for each area. At the time of the research, however, an ongoing process of clustering was taking place. This aimed to ensure that each camp had equal coverage of activities for different competency levels and age groups, and for equal periods of time, to restore a sense of coordinated activities that was previously absent.

### So what does coordinated education planning and response contribute?

While this research cannot empirically demonstrate a link between coordination practices and education outcomes, anecdotal and other existing evidence – examined through the five Education Cannot Wait (ECW) outcomes framework (equity and gender equality, access, continuity, protection and quality) – points to several links between education coordination and outcomes in Cox's Bazar (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 Linking education coordination to education outcomes in Cox's Bazar**



Source: Authors' analysis using SOHS DAC framing criteria

## Recommendations

To strengthen coordinated education planning and response in Bangladesh, this study recommends that the government and donors:

1. Invest more in support, training and the coordination systems in Bangladesh. Despite funding already being available for two full-time dedicated sector coordinators and two full-time dedicated Information Management Officers, greater investment is needed to correlate with the focus place on coordination.
2. Create a Bangladeshi sector coordinator role to help reduce impacts of high staff turnover, improve understanding of local partner capacities, help facilitate communication with local government actors, provide cultural insight and more equal leadership representation, and further align the response with the Grand Bargain.
3. Use Bangladesh as an opportunity to explore alternative coordination structures.

## Conceptual framework: Bangladesh

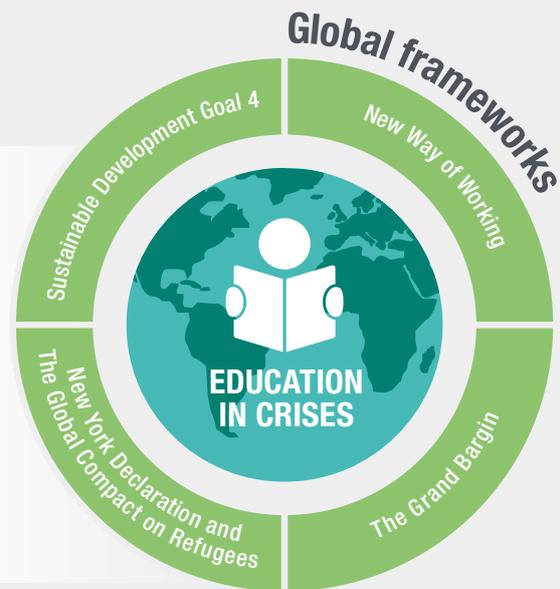
Key features that shape education coordination outcomes

### Country context



The crisis escalated in August 2017, when targeted violence against Rohingya communities from Rakhine State in Myanmar forced over 745,000 Rohingya people, including over 400,000 children, to flee their homes into neighbouring Cox's Bazar, resulting in one of the fastest-growing refugee crises in the world.

While the UN system refers to the population as Rohingya refugees in keeping with the applicable international framework, the Government of Bangladesh refers to the Rohingya as 'Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals', leading to an ambiguous legal status that has led to the limitation of Rohingya children from the national curriculum and the use of the Bangla language as a medium of instruction.



### Who: Coordination approaches

The main actors coordinating leadership for education planning and response, their responsibilities, as well as the type of group(s) present.

- The Government of Bangladesh leads the response for Rohingya refugees.
- Country-wide coordination is led from Dhaka by the NTF and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR). The influx of refugees in 2017 led to robust coordination of the operation by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) under the MoDMR.
- An education cluster in Dhaka, co-led by Save the Children and UNICEF, has long served coordination of partners during emergencies including at present.
- In August 2017, the Bangladeshi government began to allow UNHCR a larger role in the response. What resulted is a Strategic Executive Group (SEG), co-chaired by the IOM Chief of Mission, the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNHCR country representative. The response is coordinated in collaboration with the RRRC, the Deputy Commissioner, and relevant line ministries, which includes responding humanitarian actors; United Nations agencies; national and international NGOs; donors and other stakeholders.

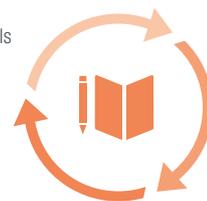


### How: Ways of working

The critical processes and tools that shape the experience of education planning and response throughout programme/project cycles.

The 'Faerman factors' analysis on predisposition, incentives, leadership, and equity reveals:

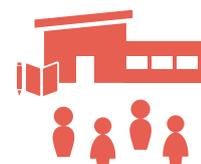
- The hybrid system of coordination in Bangladesh created tensions between individuals due to unclear roles and responsibilities, and competition over leadership roles.
- The education sector coordination mechanism created incentives to coordinate, such as through processes to standardise practices, access to funding sources that would be out of reach for smaller organisations, training opportunities and networking with other organisations.
- The emerging system of coordination in Bangladesh has created an opportunity to question some of the broader normative frameworks that enables humanitarian and development actors in crisis contexts to work together.



### So what: Evidence of impact

The collective education outcomes of coordinated education planning and response as linked to coordination quality measures.

- **Access:** education access is increasing, and continuity ensured through disasters.
- **Protection:** safe spaces remain important in providing psychological support, chicken pox outbreak responded to effectively.
- **Quality:** new levels and age groups for student learning, standards established across camps and teaching learning circles provide training.
- **Equity and gender equality:** attendance of adolescent girls is improving.



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# 1 Introduction

In August 2017, targeted violence against Rohingya communities from Rakhine State in Myanmar forced over 745,000 Rohingya people, including over 400,000 children, to flee their homes into neighbouring Cox’s Bazar, resulting in one of the fastest-growing refugee crises in the world. While the UN system refers to the population as Rohingya refugees in keeping with the applicable international framework,<sup>2</sup> the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), which leads and coordinates the response, referred to the Rohingya as ‘forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals’ (SEG, 2019),<sup>3</sup> reflecting their decision not to recognise Rohingya as refugees under international law. The absence of clearly recognised legal status or defined access to rights and services had significant consequences for their education, as it was accompanied by the subsequent decision to curtail Rohingya children’s access to the national curriculum or the Bangla language as a medium of instruction. Those who are recognised as refugees also do not have access to government schools.

It also had consequences for coordination of the response. By choosing to define Rohingya as undocumented Myanmar Nationals under the National Strategy on Myanmar Refugees and Undocumented Myanmar Nationals in 2013, Bangladesh designated IOM to be the lead international partner in line with their international mandate rather than the UNHCR, which would normally coordinate refugee responses. Although UNHCR’s role has

expanded since the beginning of the influx in August 2017 (now coordinated by UNHCR, Refugee Coordinator’s office and IOM through a Strategic Executive Group), the crisis presented an unorthodox refugee coordination mechanism.

Bangladesh, therefore, provides a unique case study to draw lessons to inform current and future coordination of education responses in emergencies. This case study explores the Bangladesh context in order to identify some of these lessons as part of a larger research project which lays out the methodological and conceptual foundations on which this research is based.

The structure of this report is as follows. Chapter 1 gives a broad background to the research and sets out the case study methodology and framework. Chapter 2 sets out key information on the Bangladeshi context and the current state of the education response. Chapter 3 deals with the ‘who’ of coordination, providing a general overview of the coordination system. It also discusses the main coordinating mechanisms and the national and international actors aligned with these systems. Chapter 4 focuses on the ‘how’ of coordination, exploring the means, mechanisms and experiences of those involved in coordination. Chapter 5 explores the ‘so what’ of coordination to help understand some of the implications and impacts of coordination arrangements. Chapters 6 and 7 follow with a conclusion and recommendations on how to strengthen coordinated education planning and response for children and young people affected by crises.

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2 The Convention defines a refugee as someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (Article 1A(2), 1951 Refugee Convention).

3 In this document, the term refugee is used to refer to both.

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# 2 Research framework and methodology

This section sets out the overall framework for the research, including its main aims and research questions, explaining how the Bangladesh case study relates to the broader research project and setting out basic case study methodology.

## 2.1 Framing the research

Recognising the need for strengthened planning, response and coordination for education in crisis-affected contexts, the Education Cannot Wait Fund (ECW) is supporting a strategic partnership between the Global Education Cluster (GEC), UNHCR and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), which aims to increase the attention to, resources and support for improved coordination for education in crises-affected settings. The partnership has commissioned the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to deliver research to examine how humanitarian and development actors coordinate EiE planning and response to strengthen education outcomes for children and young people affected by crises.

This research will look at the ‘who’, the ‘how’ and the ‘so what’ of coordination of education in emergencies and protracted crises for the Rohingya response in Bangladesh, resulting in recommendations for action that can be taken by different types of stakeholder across different contexts, including the ECW and key partners. The research questions are:

### Primary question:

*How can humanitarian and development actors effectively coordinate planning and responses to strengthen education outcomes for children and young people affected by crises?*

### Sub-questions:

- Q1: *Who* are the main stakeholders contributing to country-level education coordination in emergencies and protracted crises, and how can their roles be optimised?
- Q2: *How* can coordination of education planning and response be made more effective?
- Q3: *So what* does coordinated education planning and response contribute to better education and other collective outcomes for children and young people affected by crises?

The Bangladesh country case study is a contribution towards the process of creating country-level evidence base, which will then be synthesised to develop a stronger global evidence base on what works in coordination across and within particular contexts.

## 2.2 Case study methodology

The case study approach is based on four main steps, set out below:

1. An initial literature review and stakeholder mapping.
2. In-country research in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.
3. Remote interviews with key informants (KIs) in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
4. Analysis of collected data.
5. Validation of findings with key stakeholders through a validation group.

### 2.2.1 Literature review and stakeholder mapping

The literature review and stakeholder mapping involved a review of existing literature on the country context, education system, crisis and

response. Literature was provided by the Global Partners who circulated requests for information to various key focal points related to the crisis. This was complemented by searches of databases known to the research team to be valuable sources of data around humanitarian responses. Together, over 150 documents were reviewed. The literature review was then augmented by phone interviews with KIs involved in the humanitarian response and coordination efforts prior to the in-country research. The analysis of this information was then used to hone the focus of the in-country research, shape specific research questions and target specific stakeholders for key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs).

The review found that coordination challenges in Bangladesh have received attention from a number of organisations who have performed similar research and made recommendations to improve coordination in Bangladesh (see Annex 1 for a summary). The literature review drew on these existing studies and their recommendations to inform this research.

In-country research took place over a period of five days in Cox’s Bazar. The research team conducted 20 KIIs with key stakeholders involved in the education response, 10 FGDs and three observations of education sector coordination mechanisms (an education focal point meeting, education sector meeting and a Technical Working Group (TWIG) on the design of learning centres) (Table 1). The research team were co-hosted by UNHCR and the Education Sector Coordinators that took responsibility for setting up interviews and FGDs, as well as providing transport and securing research permissions. KIs were informed that discussions would remain confidential and none of the gathered data would be attributed to the KI.

Extensive efforts were made to reach out to a range of KIs as outlined in Table 1, though the number of respondents ultimately secured in various categories was largely dependent on the level of response.

The KIIs and FGDs were semi-structured. They drew on a list of questions developed according to the global analysis framework (ODI, 2020), the country-specific literature review and analysis from the initial KIIs (Annex 2). The questions also allowed interviewees (and interviewers) the space to outline and explore other relevant issues and emerging topics.

In order to maximise time with coordinating actors in Cox’s Bazar, interviews with staff working in Dhaka were held via Skype after the in-country research between 8 April and 29 April 2018 and included four KIIs with key stakeholders involved in the response from international organisations, donor agencies, INGOs and NNGOs.

### 2.2.2 Analysis

The analysis stage consisted of a thematic analysis approach, drawing together information collected from the in-country research and secondary literature. It was coded by source, research question and theme, before being grouped with corresponding data points in order to triangulate findings.

Analysis of ‘who’ is addressed by mapping the formal role of different actors in the literature and sector planning documents and was augmented with information derived from the key information interviews. The analysis process for the ‘how’ of coordination – looking at enabling factors and constraints – draws on a framework derived from organisational science, adopted for the case studies and referred to in these studies as the Faerman factors (predisposition, incentives, leadership and equity) (Faerman et al., 2001). Analysis of

**Table 1 Interview participants**

KI affiliation	Individual KII	FG KII with LCMC	WG observations
Education actors	18	19 KII in 7 FGD	3
Government agencies	2	3 KII in 1 FGD	–
Beneficiary Learning Centre Management Committees	–	10 KII in 2 FGD	–
Dhaka KIIs	4	–	–
Total	24	KII in 10 FGD	3

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the ‘so what’ of coordinated education planning and response was structured according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) outcomes outlined in the 2018 *State of the Humanitarian System* (SOHS) report and provides examples of instances where coordination impacted the efficacy of the humanitarian response or directly contributed to collective education outcomes (ALNAP, 2018; ECW, 2018a).

The findings from this research will be used by ECW supported Global Partners Project to produce a set of practical recommendations that can form an action plan to be taken up and used at country level. These will focus on how existing

stakeholders, structures and resources can be organised to close gaps in the response and improve its effectiveness. This action plan goes beyond the research process described here and is not included in this report.

### **2.2.3 Validation**

The validation stage involved sharing the country case study report with a Country Validation Group of 10 individuals for their review and comments, as well as a Global Reference Group of five experts on humanitarian and education coordination issues. The case study was then revised and finalised based on these inputs.

## Conceptual framework

Key features that shape education coordination outcomes

### Country contexts



**Country situation:** the geographic, political, legal, social and economic context of the country, as well as existing capacity of national and/or regional authorities to respond to the crisis



**Type of crisis:** violence and conflict, environmental, health, complex emergencies, and whether displacement produces either internal displacement or refugee situations, and the scale of displacement, disasters or mixed situations



**Phase of crisis:** Sudden onset emergency and/or protracted situation



### Who: Coordination approaches

The main actors coordinating leadership for education planning and response, their responsibilities, as well as the type of group(s) present.

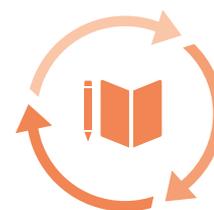
- **Ministry of Education**, and/or other national ministries, often in a lead or co-lead role for all coordination groups listed below
- Regional or local **government bodies** overseeing education and/or emergency response
- **IASC Humanitarian cluster coordination approach**, with the Global Education Cluster co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children, and country level cluster leadership varied
- **Refugee Coordination Model** led by UNHCR
- **Development coordination**, through Local Education Groups, typically co-led by multi- and bilateral donors
- Mixed, regional and other **hybrid approaches**



### How: Ways of working

The critical processes and tools that shape the experience of education planning and response throughout programme/project cycles.

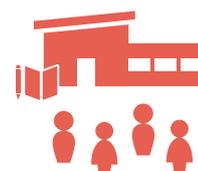
- **Coordination across the humanitarian programme cycle (HCP) and refugee response planning cycle:** needs assessment and analysis, strategic response planning, resource mobilisation, implementation and monitoring, operational review and evaluation
- **INEE Minimum Standards:** a global tool that articulates the minimum level of educational quality and access in emergencies through to recovery
- **The Faerman Factors:** predisposition, incentives, leadership and equity highlighting the softer side of coordination



### So what: Evidence of impact

The collective education outcomes of coordinated education planning and response as linked to coordination quality measures.

- **Collective education outcomes set out in Education Cannot Wait strategy:** access, equity and gender equality, protection, quality and continuity
- **Coordination quality measured by OECD DAC criteria:** coverage, relevance/appropriateness, coherence, accountability and participation, effectiveness, complementarity, sufficiency, efficiency, connectedness and impact



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# 3 The Bangladesh context and Rohingya education response

## 3.1 Country education system

Although the most recent influx of Rohingya refugees in 2017 has been prevented from using the Bangladeshi curriculum, the Bangladeshi education system is an important backdrop to the current Rohingya crisis and has influenced decisions around Rohingya education. According to official statistics, in 2017 over 33 million students in Bangladesh were enrolled in recognised institutions: 3.7 million in pre-primary, 17.3 million in primary (grades 1–5) and 13.2 million in secondary (grades 6–12). The education system is divided into four levels: pre-primary, primary (grades 1–5), secondary (grades 6–12) and higher education (BANBEIS, 2018). Approximately 59% of primary schools are managed and financed by the Ministry of Mass and Primary Education (MoMPE) serving three-quarters of children in schools, while the remainder are served through non-formal education, vocational or madrasa schooling either by other ministries or NGOs. Secondary education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MoE), although the sector is dominated by private schools (USAID, 2018).

Education is highly centralised, with administrative and financial powers largely concentrated in Dhaka. It remains a national priority in Bangladesh, yet during the past decade, annual public education expenditures have remained at around 2% of gross domestic product (GDP), and public education generally receives 14%–16% of the total national budget (USAID, 2018). While making strides in achieving close to universal primary school enrolment for boys and

girls at the primary and secondary levels, the size of the education system and its limited budget has led to low learning outcomes. A study conducted for the Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development project found that only 37% of students in grades 2 and 3 in government primary schools could read and comprehend a grade-level text in Bangla (SCI, 2018).

Cox's Bazar is one of the worst-performing districts in Bangladesh, according to almost all education indicators of national schools. School access and retention are low. The district has the lowest percentage of children of primary school age enrolling in first grade (71%), compared to the Bangladesh average of 98%, and it has the second-highest dropout rate (31%) in the country. Out of 64 districts, Cox's Bazar ranks second last in reading and maths in the primary level draft National Student Assessment (USAID, 2018).

Education access in the country has perennially been impacted by the country's climate vulnerabilities. Bangladesh's topography, combined with high population density and widespread poverty, makes it highly susceptible to floods, drought, cyclones, landslides and earthquakes (USAID, 2018). According to the World Bank, more than 80% of the population is potentially exposed (World Bank, 2018). The national education sector – with support from international partners – has made significant efforts to prepare for and reduce the impact of natural hazards with disaster preparedness incorporated into primary and secondary schools, yet schools double as cyclone shelters, which can result in school being interrupted during a disaster (USAID, 2018).

## 3.2 Evolution of refugee situation

Decades of high poverty (78% in the Rakhine state compared to the national average of 37.5%), as well as ‘systemic discrimination, statelessness and targeted violence’ have pushed Rohingya girls, boys, women and men from Rakhine state, Myanmar, into neighbouring Bangladesh. There were spikes in influxes that followed violent attacks on the Rohingya in 1978, 1991–1992 and 2016. As a result, there were already over 300,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh prior to the August 2017 influx.

However, the most severe spate of violence and refugee movement began in August 2017, when more than 30 police and army posts were reportedly attacked, for which the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army later claimed responsibility. The government responded with force, destroying hundreds of Rohingya villages and forcibly displacing hundreds of thousands of people in what is described as a ‘widespread and systematic attack directed against a civilian population’ including ‘murder, imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture, rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence, persecution, and enslavement’ with ‘elements of extermination and deportation’ and ‘systematic oppression and discrimination [that] may also amount to the crime of apartheid’ (HRC, 2018). Most Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh; some also sought refuge in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia (Chatzky and Albert, 2018).

While refugees were originally accommodated in existing camps in Kutupalong and Nayapara

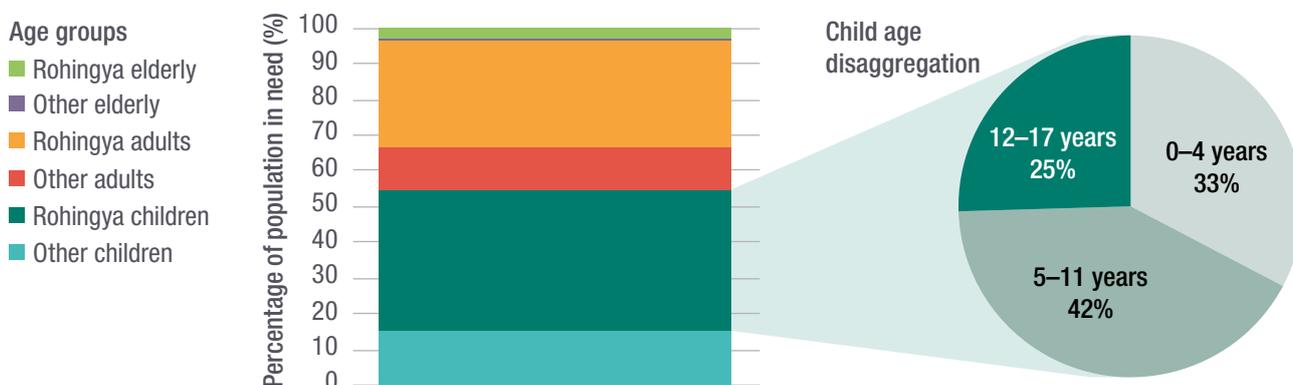
and then makeshift settlements in Leda or Balukhali, they were soon directed to other makeshift settlements in Ukhiya and Teknaf in Cox’s Bazar.

By January 2019, this movement brought the stateless Rohingya refugees to total over 900,000 in the Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas (sub-districts) (SEG, 2019). At the time of writing, 623,000 refugees reside in a merged ‘mega camp’ in the Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion site that has effectively become Bangladesh’s fifth largest city in terms of population (UNICEF, 2018).

Over half (55%) of Rohingya refugees are children, mostly of primary school age (see Figure 2). Rakhine state is still not deemed safe for the Rohingya, so it is unlikely that these numbers will diminish in the near future. The GoB has continued to keep its borders open to the Rohingya (SEG, 2019).

The GoB has, however, restricted the type of education provision for new arrivals of Rohingya children. Prior to the 2017 crisis, Bangladesh hosted and registered 32,000 Rohingya as refugees and permitted UNHCR to use the Bangladeshi curriculum to provide education services (UNICEF, 2018). These registered refugees across two registered camps (Kutupalong and Nayapara) had accessed education using the Bangladesh curriculum since 2007. Those arriving after August 2017, however, were referred to as ‘forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals’ and denied education services until December 2017, when the government allowed informal education services, under the condition that no Bangla or Bangladeshi curriculums be used.

**Figure 2 Population in need in Bangladesh**



Source: authors’ analysis based on Joint Response Plan data

### 3.2.1 Current education needs for refugees

At the time of writing, over 39% of children aged 3–14 years and 97% of adolescents and youths aged 15–24 were not attending any type of education facility. While the achievement of reaching so many is laudable, an additional 2,000 facilities are needed to improve access to learning for children between three and four years old, in turn needing 68 acres, reflecting the extent of the challenges ahead (SEG, 2019).

Concerns are aggravated by the constant threat of natural hazards in the country, meaning that refugee camps could be destroyed in the event of severe weather such as landslides and flooding (SEG, 2019). In 2019, an estimated \$59.5m is needed to further expand education support.

Improving the quality of education has also been a major challenge. Restrictions placed on the use of Bangladeshi and Myanmar curriculums resulted in some partners adopting and implementing disparate, uncoordinated learning approaches and materials. In response, partners developed the Learning Competency Framework and Approach (LCFA) designed to give structure to learning activities in camps, although complexities associated with its development and the production of materials left long periods unstructured. The LCFA was submitted for government approval in February 2018 and the related learning materials were introduced in January 2019, although concerns still remain over it not being linked to a recognised accreditation system.

The establishment of religious education centres (madrasas and maqtabas) have provided many Rohingya with informal education activities and, according to a joint needs assessment published in June 2018, are widely respected among the Rohingya population (CBES, 2018). A Multi-Sector Needs Assessment undertaken in July 2018 found a higher proportion of children reported to be attending religious education centres than NGO-run learning centres, and most children reportedly attending NGO learning centres were also reported as attending religious learning centres (REACH, 2018). However, a lack of relevant qualifications among madrasa staff was identified as an issue and few if any of the Myanmar

teachers were reported to have completed high school education (CBES, 2018). Timetabling clashes between learning centres and madrasas are also reportedly common, with some staff at madrasas reportedly hostile to learning centres, pressurising children not to attend (CBES, 2018).

Since the survey, a lot has been done to enhance relationships between learning centres and the religious community, including a survey to identify opportunities to collaborate with madrasas and an ongoing pilot with several madrasas as alternative learning spaces. Moreover, a madrasa taskforce has been established. A February to April 2019 education needs assessment shows 67% of children between the ages of six and 14 reported attending both madrasas and learning centres, with only 12% attending only madrasas (REACH, 2019), suggesting an increasing reliance on learning centres.

Protection continues to be a major concern. In 2018 there were various reports of gender-based violence and abuse, partly as a result of perceptions of insecurity, and also social norms limiting mobility for women and adolescent girls (SEG, 2019). In 2018, 40% of parents of adolescent girls, and 33% of parents of adolescent boys, felt that education was not appropriate for their children (SEG, 2019). This is partly linked to social norms which restrict mobility for girls after puberty. Perceived safety threats in learning facilities are also a concern, particularly for young learners between six and 14 years old (SEG, 2019).

Threats to social cohesion loom large as the crisis increasingly shows signs of becoming protracted (Loy, 2019). In Bangladeshi host communities, there has been frustration as local teachers move away to higher paid jobs in the camps (SEG, 2019).

## 3.3 Financing for education

Authorisation for NGOs to operate in Bangladesh is heavily regulated by foreign donations approval processes (known as FD7s) operated by the GoB. NGOs not registered in Bangladesh prior to the influx have faced a number of challenges to gaining permission to

start education activities. Delays to the FD7 approval processes,<sup>4</sup> including rejection of certain education activities, impacted NGOs' capacity to respond to and deliver on immediate needs. As UN agencies are not subject to the same approval process, many donors opted to channel money through these. This has led to lower numbers of NGO partners and the most funding being channelled through UN organisations.

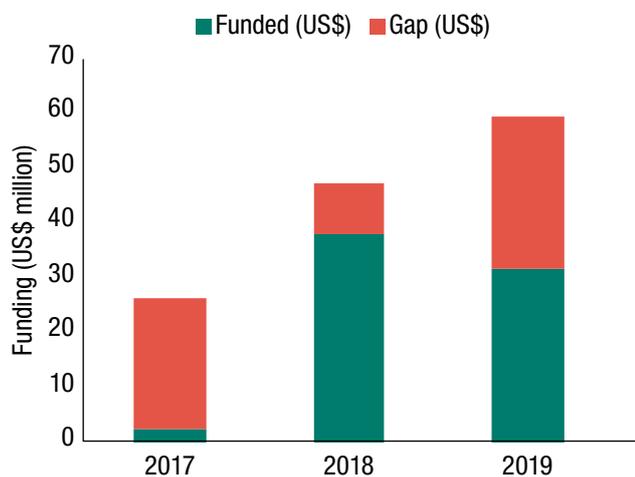
The response is still underfunded, with only 71% of total JRP needs and 80% of educational JRP needs met in 2018 (see Figure 3). However, according to the JRP (see Box 1), the range of actors and funding streams in the response is starting to diversify and increase (see Figure 4), galvanising new partnerships and collaboration as envisaged by the New Way of Working (SEG, 2019; OCHA, 2017; FTS, 2019).<sup>5</sup> Bilateral donations and non-traditional donors, among other actors contributing outside the scope of the JRP 2019, are expected to play an important role in the overall response in 2019.

### Box 1 Joint Response Plan education sector objectives

1. Expand and strengthen immediate access to equitable learning opportunities, in a safe and protective environment, for crisis-affected refugee and host-community children and youth (3–24 years old).
2. Improve the quality of teaching and learning for refugee children and youth, in alignment with education sector standards, and increase teaching-related professional development opportunities, as well as supporting relevant improvements to education for host-community children.
3. Increase refugee and host-community participation and engagement in the education of children and youth.

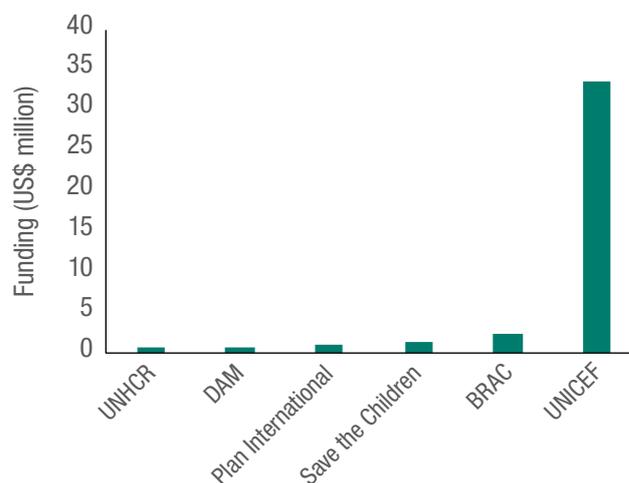
Source: SEG (2019)

**Figure 3 Joint Response Plan education funding trends in Bangladesh**



Source: FTS, 2019

**Figure 4 Recipients of education funding, 2018**



Source: FTS, 2019

4 These FD7s are issued on a project-level basis, specify approved activities and costs, and are valid for a set duration.

5 The FTS dataset is fed by voluntary reports on funding flows and pledges provided by donors and recipient organisations. If donors do not report financial information the FTS will underestimate the funding received. In some contexts, the FTS does not capture multi-year funding.

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Education fared well in 2018 in comparison to other sectors, covering 80.3% of its funding appeals through the JRP. This is a marked improvement over 2017, where it obtained the least coverage of all the sectors at only 7.6% (FTS, 2019). Concerns have been raised however, over the short-term funding models that still predominate, and the tendency for funding to rapidly decrease after the first few years of a displacement related emergencies (Wake and Yu, 2018). When considered with the temporary and parallel education approach being requested by the GoB, significant concerns remain over the sustainability of current provisions.

A number of development actors have also joined the response with funds designed to serve

both Bangladeshi and Rohingya populations. The Asian Development Bank has allocated \$200 million, while the World Bank has allocated \$480 million for refugees and host communities over a period of three years (SEG, 2019).

In addition, the ECW has expanded and scaled up its support to coordinated mechanisms over the last year. ECW facilitated development of a Multi-Year Resilience Programme 2018–2020 for Bangladesh, which builds on the existing emergency response to target refugee populations while additionally supporting improvements in host communities and has a component on systems strengthening to ensure sustainability (ECW, 2018a).

# 4 The 'who' of coordination in Bangladesh

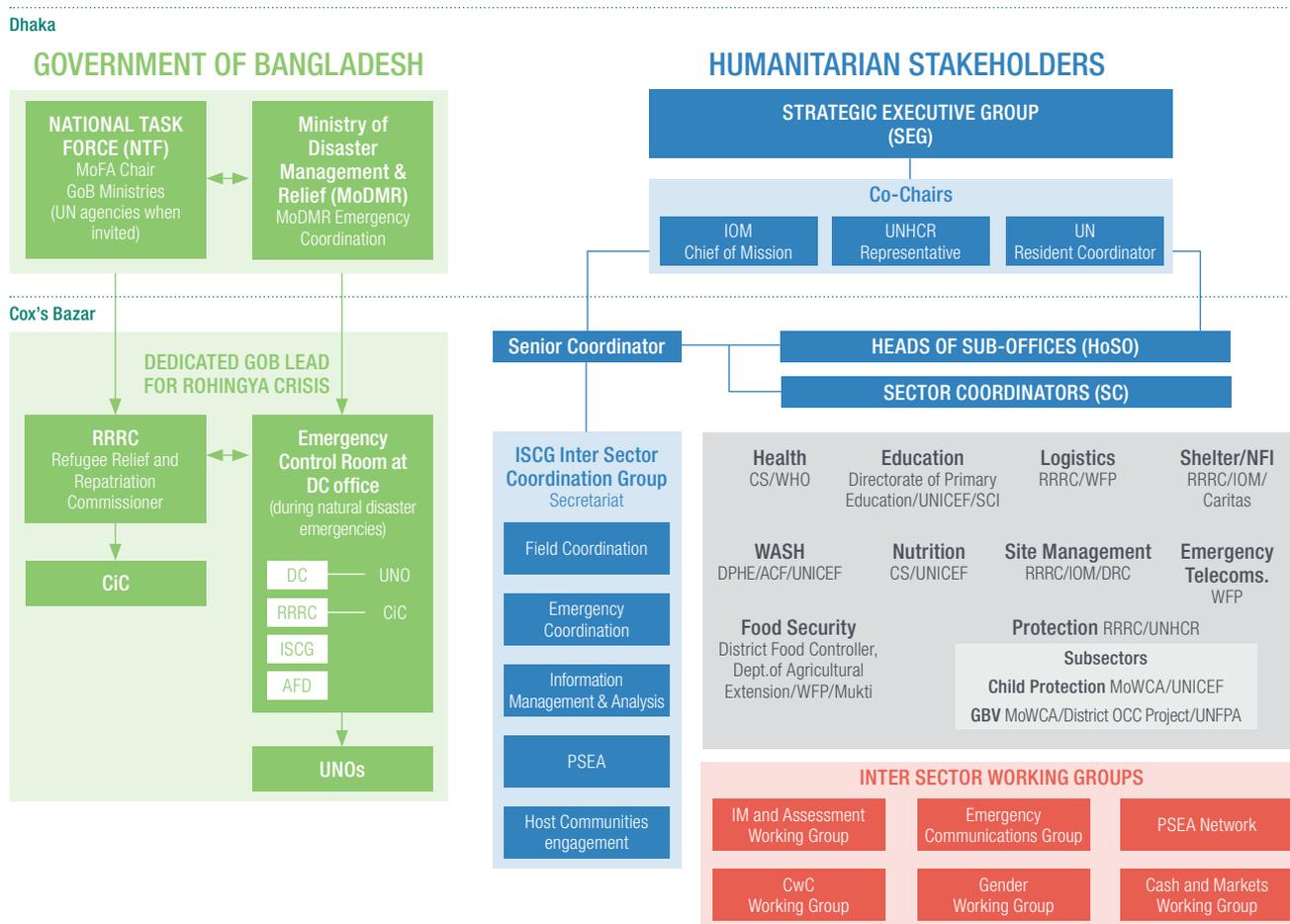
Who are the main stakeholders contributing to country-level education coordination in emergencies and protracted crises, and how can their roles be optimised?

There are a wide range of actors contributing to education coordination in response to the Rohingya crisis. These are treated in turn below, grouped by the level at which they operate.

## 4.1 National humanitarian coordination and delivery system

The GoB leads on responses for Rohingya refugees and has done so for many years (see Figure 5). In 2013, the Government established a National Strategy on Myanmar Refugees and Undocumented Myanmar

Figure 5 Coordination structure for response to 2016–20 Rohingya influx



Notes: The Dhaka & Cox's Bazar Humanitarian architecture works to support the Government of Bangladesh's response to the Rohingya Crisis. This Support extends at all the above noted levels in both Dhaka and Cox's Bazar. Source: SEG (2019)

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Nationals, which included the establishment of a National Task Force (NTF) to provide strategic guidance and policy for the response. Country-wide coordination is led from Dhaka by the NTF and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), the latter for the operational delivery, although the influx of refugees in 2017 necessitated more robust coordination of the operation being led by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) under the MoDMR. The RRRC has a separate reporting line to Dhaka and is not under the oversight of the Deputy Commissioner (DC), though the security elements are directed by the DC. An education cluster in Dhaka (although not officially activated as a cluster), co-led by SCI and UNICEF, has long served coordination of partners during emergencies and continues to serve in-country partners today. This mechanism provided a foundation to launch the response to the recent Rohingya influx and remains involved with both the Rohingya response and broader national humanitarian and development activities.

A key feature of the national level coordination is the long-standing Dhaka-based Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG), which has been in operation for around 15 years. It consists of donors, civil society and government. It was formed when the idea of a sector-wide approach for primary education was first articulated. The ELCG reports to the main Local Consultative Group of sectoral donors. Since the influx, KIs note that it has increasingly focused on education in crisis situations. Co-chaired by the MoMPE and a rotating international organisation – at the time of writing, UNICEF – the ELCG is designed to provide an entry point for advocating additional resources, providing a platform for policy and advocacy coordination and as a forum to engage in dialogue with the GoB. It contains various members, including donors and non-state actors like Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), and international organisations like SCI and Plan International. CAMPE represents all NGOs working in the camp, constituting 232 voting members and 15 teacher unions. INGOs have sometimes been represented through SCI and Plan International. The ELCG meets

quarterly and has developed over time from a predominantly information-sharing forum to a more active role in advocacy, particularly around strategising activities ranging from lobbying particular agencies to continuing work on education sector plans.

Humanitarian actors, which are part of the Cox's Bazar education sector established for the 2016–2017 Rohingya influx, have been coordinating around a JRP (SEG, 2019) through a system that has seen a number of iterations over the years. In October 2016 an Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) was established to serve the growing number of Rohingya refugees in camps. It is unique to the context of the Rohingya response (UNICEF, 2018). The ISCG drew on principles of the cluster approach, but with the IOM as a lead agency when it was established. This stood in contrast to the refugee coordination model that is usually adopted, with UNHCR leading (UNICEF, 2018a). In August 2017, at the beginning of the height of the influx, the GoB began to allow UNHCR a larger role in the response. This resulted in a Strategic Executive Group (SEG), co-chaired by the IOM Chief of Mission, the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNHCR country representative, to act as the lead agency over the existing ISCG, and was formally acknowledged by the Government in January 2018 (UNICEF, 2018). The response is coordinated in collaboration with the RRRC, the Deputy Commissioner and relevant line ministries; it includes responding humanitarian actors, United Nations agencies, NNGOs and INGOs, donors and other stakeholders.

## **4.2 District coordination and delivery system of the Rohingya response**

At the district level, a senior coordinator of the ISCG in Cox's Bazar brings together the heads of all UN agencies and representatives of the INGO and NNGO community, as well as donor representatives based in Cox's Bazar, for both host-community and camp activities. The senior coordinator reports to the three SEG co-chairs at the time of writing and chairs a Heads of Sub-Office Group (HoSOG), ensuring coordination with the RRRC, the DC and Upazila Nirbahi

Officers (a UNO is the chief executive of an Upazila (sub-district) and a mid-level officer of the Bangladesh Civil Service. The senior coordinator is supported by the ISCG Secretariat acting as a central node for information management and field coordination, in close partnership with the members of the Information Management Working Group.

There are 10 sectors within the ISCG and two sub-sectors under the protection sector (child protection and gender-based violence). Within the education sector, an education sector coordination group is staffed by two education sector coordinators and two Information Managers (IMs) provided by SCI and UNICEF, although some of these positions have been vacant at various stages of the crisis. At the time of the research the UNICEF IM position was vacant, although both sector coordination positions were filled. The majority of direct coordination with the government at district level is expected to occur through the District Primary Education Officer – allocated as a point person for the education sector – and the RRR.

The education sector is steered by its Strategic Advisory Group (SAG), co-chaired by UNHCR and a representative from the District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) in the MoMPE (see Box 2). From the beginning of 2019 the SAG has convened regularly on a fortnightly basis and has a standing agenda item in the education sector coordination meeting providing updates of its activities to the education sector members. The SAG has representation from members of the education sector, including INGOs and NNGOs, as well as the education sector IMs. INGO and NNGO members are elected by the education sector partners and based on revisions made this year hold their role for a period of one year. Other organisations may be involved in the SAG meetings on an ad hoc basis (see Table 2).

Two key and permanent working groups – a monthly Education Camps focal points meeting and a fortnightly education sector meeting – are led by the education sector coordinators to facilitate coordination. Additional working groups and taskforces are established as and when the situation requires. Examples include disaster risk management working groups for the approaching monsoon season and a madrasa

taskforce in light of concerns over overlap in education provision between the madrasas and learning centres. These groups are supported by a series of tools, including a Google Groups Mailing list for communicating with partners and the 5Ws.

The ISCG has so far developed three principal documents to guide the response: the Humanitarian Response Plan, released in October 2017 for a six-month period, and then the JRP, published in March 2018 and updated in January 2019 for the period January–December 2019. At the time of the research, the education sector was also in the process of developing an Education Sector Workplan that resembles an Education Sector Plan and provides more detailed objectives.

## **Box 2 Education sector tools and mechanisms, April 2019**

### **Education mechanisms**

- Education Local Consultation Group (ELCG) (Dhaka)
- Education Sector Strategic Advisory Group
- Fortnightly education sector meeting
- Education Camps Focal Points meeting
- Education Sector Standards Working Group
- Disaster Risk Management Working Group
- LCFA Task Force
- Engagement with madrasa taskforce
- Youth Working Group
- Design of Learning Centres – Technical Working Group (TWIG)

### **Education tools**

- 5W Camp/Host community
- Google Groups Mailing list for education sector
- Education Interactive Partner Tracker
- Facility registration system

Note: The functions of the different mechanisms here do not illustrate any hierarchies, but are written out for purely illustrative purposes to indicate the types of group and meeting that occur.

**Table 2 Education implementers and partners according to 5Ws, April 2019**

Implementing partner	Programme partner
<b>National</b>	
BRAC	UNHCR, UNICEF
COAST	COAST, UNICEF
<b>CODEC</b>	<b>UNHCR, UNICEF</b>
Friendship	Action Contre la Faim, Friendship, SIF, UNICEF
ISDE	ISDE
JCF	UNICEF
Mukti	COTE, UNICEF
Prantic	OBAT
RISDA	UNICEF
SKUS	AMURT
Small Kindness Bangladesh	Small Kindness Bangladesh
<b>YPSA</b>	<b>SCI</b>
<b>International</b>	
Dan Church Aid (DCA)	DCA, Finn Church Aid
<b>Handicap International</b>	<b>Handicap International</b>
Muslim Hands International	Muslim Hands International
DAM	UNICEF
Plan	UNICEF
SCI	UNICEF
<b>BRAC</b>	<b>UNHCR</b>
VSO	VSO
VSO	VSO

Bold = undertaking camp and host-community activities

### 4.3 Camp coordination and delivery system

At the camp level, coordination is led by the Camp-in-Charge officials (CiCs), appointed by the GoB. CiCs are generally seconded from different ministries and in the past this has resulted in high turnover of CiC staff. CiCs chair regular camp level coordination meetings for each sector of the camp, attended by camp level sector focal points. In education, these focal points are Bangladeshi staff from responding organisations, who adopt both their organisations' and focal point duties

simultaneously. Focal points are asked to put themselves forward for the position to the education sector, which then facilitates the selection by taking the preferences of the other actors in the particular camp and the preferences of the CiC into consideration.

Every learning centre in camp communities is represented by a Learning Centre Management Committee (LCMC). These committees consist of approximately nine community members, around 50% of whom must be women, and may involve teachers and imams, as well as respected members of the community. LCMCs were established as part of the education sector standards established in the early phases through a collaborative process. LCMCs discuss school-related issues, such as attendance, punctuality and school needs. They represent the learning centres for coordination with the education focal points and the education sector.

Host-community activities include training of host-community teachers working in camps, distribution of education materials to host-community schools and school rehabilitation. Organisations undertaking these activities often work in both camp and host communities and report activities to the education sector. DPEO/MOPME mechanisms guide and coordinate the activities with implementing organisations directly.

### 4.4 Key actors in the education coordination and delivery system

The make-up of the education response reflects the challenges in obtaining permission to operate in Bangladesh. NNGOs have taken on key roles in the education response, comprising 12 of the 19 implementing partners. The Community Development Centre (CODEC) and BRAC, in particular, have been central partners for UNHCR and UNICEF, and the education sector, implementing the majority of learning centres in camps. More international actors are now being permitted to implement activities and are beginning to enter the response at the time the research was conducted. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), often a key actor in education, although working through Plan International and supporting the sector activities in 2018, had only been able to begin direct implementation

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in 2019 due to issues around obtaining government approval.

Early in the response, the focus was on ‘nationalising the response’ from a government perspective, with the emphasis on hiring and working with local entities. While NNGOs provided the basis for quick responses, the sheer number, on top of the international organisations that are now entering the response, has put a strain on the education sector coordinators. At the time of writing, there were a total of 36 partners

involved in the education response, a number expected to increase over the coming year.

Given the urgent need to provide basic services, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have proposed grant financing at the request of the GoB that incorporates provisions for the Rohingya response. The World Bank are also active members of the ELCG, highlighting their increasing engagement with the education response mechanisms.

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# 5 The ‘how’ of coordination in Bangladesh

*How* can coordination of education planning and response be made more effective?

This section examines the ‘how’ of coordination. It looks particularly at the enabling and constraining factors for coordination, as well as providing details on specific tools and mechanisms where appropriate. The analysis is framed by four factors thought to contribute to the success or failure of inter-organisational coordination efforts (Nolte et al., 2012; Faerman et al., 2001).

1. **Predisposition** refers to the initial tendencies and dispositions that entities have towards potential partners that facilitate or inhibit working collaboratively. These predispositions can be both institutional and personal: structures channel behaviour in particular ways; thus the system may tend to encourage or inhibit cooperation, with these tendencies in turn shaping personal interactions.
2. **Incentives** relate to the ongoing ‘structuring’ of collaborative relationships over time, and the costs of and benefits obtained from coordinating with partners.
3. **Leadership** and leaders at all levels of an organisation can influence how people think about incentives and even alter initial dispositions as well as equity and power dynamics within coordination mechanisms.
4. **Equity** ensures consideration not just of the number of ‘equal’ actors, but also the recognition of the difference between, and comparative advantages of, actors and the consideration of the power dynamics present in any inter-organisational process.

The analysis conducted here draws heavily on KIIs, with a range of participants from across the various actors and coordination mechanisms.

## 5.1 Predispositions

### 5.1.1 Mandates, MoUs and other advance agreements

While it has long been established that the GoB and – upon invitation – UNHCR lead the response in refugee contexts, the GoB’s decision not to recognise the vast majority of Rohingya as refugees led to a situation where UNHCR was not initially invited to lead the overall refugee response, resulting in a coordination system unique to Bangladesh. Subsequently, there appeared to be a lack of common understanding characteristic of systems grounded in mandates, MoUs and other advance agreements. This lack of understanding led to confusion among stakeholders as to who held what responsibility, stalling progress on various initiatives and causing tensions between individuals across organisations. While much of this can be attributed to a lack of clarity, there also appeared to be instances of individuals attempting to control roles which were deemed to be conventionally under their traditional mandate but that had been handed to another organisation as part of the new system.

Overlapping work plans between the child protection and education sectors also caused issues for stakeholders. At the onset of the crisis, before the establishment of a learning structure through the LCFA, there were many similarities between education and protection activities such as session plans on life skills offered by both

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sectors. Competition for limited spaces and a perception of overlapping activities raised questions over whether the spaces and resources were being used most effectively.

### 5.1.2 Previous experience

Previous negative experiences in coordination within Cox's Bazar systems, often related to time delays, appeared to shape how stakeholders approach coordination today. Experiences of the SAG early on in the crisis, when its role was yet to be cemented, left some sceptical of its future efficacy. A review and revision of the SAG terms of reference is under way, yet long delays and their previous experience led some KIs in the sector to approach the SAG with scepticism and caution.

An INGO KI provided a similar example in reference to the Foundational Skills Development Framework (FSDF) for youth. A working group was established through the education sector to bring together actors across the sector around its development. The KI noted however, that their previous experience with the LCFA, particularly around the delays in getting the materials, left them cynical about the FSDF process. This in turn resulted in their establishment of a temporary, independent response: 'they say they are working on it, but our experience has been so bad [with the previous LCFA], we are just going to start with something else.' At the time of writing, the FSDF had been finalised, endorsed by the education sector, and was pending government approval, yet the example provides a useful example of how previous experiences can affect the approach partners take to coordination activities and processes.

At the Dhaka level, KIs spoke of donor fatigue settling in. One KI noted how it might become increasingly difficult to bridge the financing gap as the situation develops into a protracted crisis and donor fatigue continues. Donors' previous experiences and interpretations of the steps taken in the early phases, and the potential the sector shows for sustainable provisions, were noted as a significant factor to sustaining long-term investments.

There were, nevertheless, signs that these previous experiences can begin to be reversed. A KI from an INGO noted how seeing UNHCR

staff spending part of their time working from UNICEF offices is a good sign of strong coordination between organisations seen in the early phases to be working more independently: 'I like how this looks. From the outside, we see things working well. The symbols matter.'

### 5.1.3 How can coordination be improved?

- **Review MoUs and other advance agreements between organisations, which outline different coordination structures and the role of different actors prior to crises.** The review should cover scenarios such as that in Bangladesh, and ensure that structures are understood, adopted and accepted by stakeholders during emergencies. Mandates, MoUs and other advance agreements are the foundation on which coordination mechanisms build. While not all eventualities can be foreseen, and adaptability will always be required, ensuring that activities undertaken under the respective mandates are complementary, understood and accepted ensures the integrity of these foundations.
- **Improve processes for collaboration between child protection and education sectors.** Bangladesh is not the only context that may present overlap between these two sectors, yet the coordination processes and mechanisms between each are often left to the sectors and inter-sector coordinators to develop independently in-country. Establishing standard coordination practices by drawing on examples of successful practice elsewhere will help normalise cooperation for new and existing crises and lay a basis on which sectors can build.
- **Ensure that coordination at the onset of crises creates a healthy precedent.** Previous experience in coordinating within the Cox's Bazar systems can have a significant impact on coordination over extended periods of time. Ensuring that the structures that will serve coordination over extended periods are established early and prioritised to create positive precedents will ensure that strong coordination remains central to long-term responses.

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## 5.2 Incentives

### 5.2.1 Perceived value of coordination

Numerous KIs highlighted the value that the education sector coordination mechanism adds as an incentive to coordinate. Areas noted as being particularly beneficial were processes to standardise practices, access to funding sources that would be out of reach for smaller organisations, training opportunities and networking with other organisations. A large NNGO KI noted, ‘some NGOs are very new, so they need good ideas from exchanges. They need to discuss specific issues necessary on the ground to implement education’. Mitigating competition for limited space for activities in camps also appeared to be of significant value for partners. At the time of the research, the sector was coordinating the clustering of learning centres to ensure that each camp had a suitable distribution of centres serving different levels of competency within largely comparable age groups. Sector coordination meetings were also reported as helpful for key updates, as well as representing an opportunity for sector members to showcase new initiatives, to communicate changes and invite further input for joint solutions drafted by the various working groups and task forces under the education sector umbrella; although described by some as too large to facilitate in-depth discussions.

Issues with the coordination mechanisms however, acted as deterrents. KIs spoke about a range of working groups ‘just talking and talking’, with no real substance. Other issues included junior staff sent in place of decision-makers, meetings not feeling relevant to those in the room, mixed experience across partners that slowed down or sped up the meetings, making them hard to follow, or a general lack of key learning points to take away.

A perceived value of coordination was not the only driver of participation in coordination mechanisms. According to one KI, a number of the NNGO partners do not understand what the sector coordination mechanism is for, or what it does, but they attend as they feel they have to. These views were echoed by some of the participants in a self-reporting mechanism provided as part of an education sector

performance monitoring survey in May 2019 (Education Sector, 2019). Some partners in the survey reported being instructed by their line managers to attend without an understanding of why, or what they were supposed to do. According to the anonymous self-reporting mechanism, some of the participants understood as little as 60% of the content. Participation in coordination mechanisms, therefore, did not always equate to strengthened coordination but token involvement. The survey however, also garnered recommendations from sector members on how to rectify the issues, emphasising the importance of regular anonymous forms of feedback to sectors. In the early phases of the crisis, a Bangladeshi sector coordinator provided by SCI also showed promise of mitigating these issues. A KI in a coordination role at the time notes that the local coordinator was ‘very positive as it allowed national partners an outlet, if they didn’t feel comfortable speaking up at meetings, but also provided an opportunity for national leadership to be demonstrated’.

### 5.2.2 Capacity and competing demands

KIs unanimously agreed that the coordination activities need to continue, although it appeared to be due to a belief in the need for a solution, rather than a belief in their need to participate in coordination mechanisms to find it. An INGO KI suggested this was an issue rooted in coordination, where partners need solutions and do not necessarily have time for key staff to participate in finding them. The KI used the example of the madrasa time slots in camps overlapping with learning centres, suggesting this is the biggest issue they faced at the time of the interview, but lacked the time to join another working group. Instead, they stated they were ‘expecting the sector to step up to this’. Attending long sector meetings, taskforces and other coordination-related meetings therefore, stood in competition with other demands on partners’ time. One KI quipped, ‘we thought we should nominate a meeting manager, just to go to all the meetings, so we have time to do our job’.

A KI from the sector suggested the issue in Bangladesh lay in how these groups were put together:

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We need more voices of other organisations. But it is important to involve people based on their comparative advantage. A quality conversation is as good as its discussants. Not everyone needs to be in every group, but we need the right people in each. Curriculum development is an expertise, don't involve people just to involve them, bring in experts.

In order to mitigate the impact of competing demands, it was therefore important to ensure that meetings were held on the basis of need and that invitations are issued to all partners with clarity over the agenda and whether their attendance is required or requested. Doing so held the potential to improve the fluidity and results of meetings but also to create more positive attitudes to coordination by partners.

### 5.2.3 How can coordination be improved?

**Participation in coordination mechanisms does not always equate to strengthened coordination but to token involvement.** Constant evaluation and feedback mechanisms from participants are vital in ensuring the quality of coordination. An anonymous Coordination Performance Monitoring survey (based on the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring tool) undertaken in May 2019 has garnered rich feedback and key recommendations from partners for increasing the efficiency of coordination practices. These surveys should be undertaken at fixed regular intervals as a standard practice in responses.

**Ensuring that meetings run efficiently and are appropriate to the participants will help strengthen coordination.** While there were clearly multiple strengths across partners that can be drawn on to support the development of the sector, numerous NGOs highlighted that there were too many requests to participate in sector-wide activities, which puts strain on their already limited time. Ensuring that invitations are issued to all partners with clarity over the agenda and whether their attendance is required or requested can help maximise efficiencies and improve perceptions. While not suitable in all

instances, breaking meetings up into thematic slots could allow participants to focus attendance on relevant parts of meetings, reducing the cost in terms of time, and lowering the number of simultaneous participants.

## 5.3 Leadership

### 5.3.1 Clarity of leadership roles

This refugee crisis required unconventional responses that posed challenges for those involved in coordinating the education response. Instead of responding through more established coordination mechanisms – which in refugee contexts would have placed UNHCR as the lead agency – a hybrid system was created. A SAG chaired by UNHCR provided the overall strategic direction, while the sector coordinators brought together the response partners. While a need for hybrid systems are anticipated (UNHCR, 2017), in Bangladesh it created tensions between individuals due to unclear roles and responsibilities, competition over leadership roles or reluctance to relinquish areas felt to traditionally be their responsibility. An evaluation of UNICEF's response to the Rohingya crisis describes it as 'competition for education sector leadership' (UNICEF, 2018: 58). While the situation had greatly improved at the time of the research, at various periods over the first year of the crisis, competition over leadership roles created tensions between some UNICEF and UNHCR staff, with individuals perceived to be undermining one another's position. These issues appeared to be exacerbated by perceptions of organisational mandates and the expectations placed upon individuals from their respective organisations. Individuals at different INGOs began to side with one or the other, reportedly 'talking behind each other's backs'. One KI noted, 'I have never seen a more poisoned coordination environment'.

These clashes severely limited the ability to coordinate education planning and response. Different organisations were described as acting like 'opposition parties, criticising anything being done'. A series of different mechanisms were often established or proposed before being dismissed by another stakeholder due to conflicting views, as a matter of course, or

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through fear of one stepping on the toes of the other. Through the work of partners in-country, and with support from the GEC who sent staff to investigate and support in-country staff, solutions were found and at the time of the research, the coordination dynamics were universally agreed by KIs to have greatly improved and to be continually improving. Yet during this early period of the crisis, unclear roles and responsibilities, competition over leadership roles and reluctance to relinquish areas felt to traditionally belong to an individual or organisation significantly inhibited coordinated education planning and response.

The ECW proposal process for the first emergency response provides an example of the confusion stemming from the lack of clarity over leadership roles during this initial period of the crisis. In 2017, the first stages of an ECW investment began. The lack of clarity around whether the sector coordinators or UNHCR were supposed to be leading on the process led ECW to primarily work with the education sector coordinators. KIs noted that UNHCR felt they were removed from the process and the proposal was submitted without UNHCR seeing or signing off on the final outcome. The final ECW multi-year response plan was eventually put together and jointly submitted by the three granting agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and UNESCO) and the education sector in Cox's Bazar, yet the example highlights the issues that can occur when there is confusion over leadership roles in-country.

Clarity over leadership roles also appeared to be an issue for local partners when trying to distinguish between the sector coordinators and their respective organisations. When questioned, many international and national stakeholders, at various organisations and at various levels of KI seniority, referred to the sector as the 'UNICEF sector'. This occurred in spite of visible concerted efforts from the sector coordinators to distinguish the sector coordination role from the programming organisations themselves, and to identify SCI as a co-lead. UNICEF's many roles, as a long-term partner of the GoB, a sector and cluster co-lead at national and district levels, as the ECW granting agency, and as an implementing partner and donor created a significant footprint in the response, feeding

the perception of UNICEF as a lead agency. SCI staffing issues that led to long absences from their sector coordination role exacerbated this.

The concerns and efforts by the current sector coordinators to make distinctions between their role and their respective agencies appeared to be well justified. KIs' conflation of the sector with UNICEF led one KI to suggest they are less likely to engage with the sector coordination mechanism on issues with their programming, as they perceived it to be a risk to their UNICEF funding, as sector coordinators held responsibilities for both programme and coordination roles.

However, instead of coordinators utilising their identity as SCI and UNICEF – and seeking means of mitigating the negative impacts of these identities – they attempted to form an identity as sector coordinators, independent of their respective organisations. These steps were not those of the coordinators alone, but of the system in which they worked. Throughout the research, KIs in different organisations – international and national – and at different levels of seniority held different interpretations of what is the official or most appropriate approach. At the most extreme, suggestions were made that sector coordinators were neither Save the Children, UNICEF or Global Education Cluster staff, raising concerns over whether there was sufficient support or accountability provided for these staff or for the international organisations whose systems and principles they enact. While there are clear advantages to trying to establish independence, there were therefore also clear disadvantages. Of particular note is that the attempts to establish the coordinators as independent had limited success and prevented gains that might have been achieved by embracing each institutional identity and its comparative advantages. While neither approach will completely prevent issues over perceptions of autonomy and independence, SCI's separation from UNICEF funding appeared to be particularly advantageous and may have provided a potential avenue (through the SCI coordinator) for those concerned about raising issues with UNICEF programming in coordination meetings. This, in turn, raised questions over the most appropriate identity to embrace in humanitarian settings.

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Claims of confusion between the coordination mechanisms in Dhaka (the cluster and ELCG) and the Cox's Bazar sector also appeared to result from a lack of clarity over leadership roles. Concerns were raised by KIs in Cox's Bazar that technical teams in Dhaka were far from the local context and did not properly appreciate the issues prevalent on the ground, leading to decisions that were far removed from the context. A UN partner in Dhaka echoed these concerns, suggesting there had not been sufficient information available on Cox's Bazar activities through the ELCG. Both the cluster in Dhaka and the sector in Cox's Bazar had roles steering the response, yet it appeared that communication and coherence between the two could have been stronger. These inconsistencies raise concerns over the longer-term advocacy and development objectives of partners in-country, as each engages with the government at different, yet equally important levels. While the Dhaka cluster and Cox's Bazar sector did not exist in a hierarchical structure, as can be seen in contexts with a sector and sub-sector, similar principles of coordination should be considered.

Despite improvements in Bangladesh coordination, a report in January 2019 identified a series of coordination issues that 'can and should be addressed through adjustments in the coordination structures', including 'clarification of accountability and leadership of the international response' (Doyle et al., 2019: 2). This proposed reform of the coordination system creates an opportunity to question some of the broader normative frameworks that enable humanitarian and development actors in crisis contexts to work together; a process that has been ongoing in country. A limit to this research project is that the country case studies draw on the same normative response frameworks, which may be key to some of the constraints of coordinated education planning and response. Research into new models that may emerge from the proposals in Bangladesh could provide important lessons.

### 5.3.2 Resourcing leadership

High staff turnover, particularly in the sector coordinator positions, has been a challenge in Bangladesh. One INGO KI suggested they had worked with as many as six sector coordinators in an 18-month period. Opinions over the

causes of the high staff turnover varied from challenges in getting visas, living conditions, lack of accessibility of home countries, short-term contracts at the onset of the crisis, or simply burnout, particularly in the early phases of the crisis. One KI suggested it had more to do with the nature of coordination work, in which people move between organisations and positions to progress careers rewarded by diverse experience rather than time in post.

While KIs spoke highly of all those that had held the role, the main issues occurred in the handover period. Sector coordinators relied on partners' willing participation in coordination mechanisms – rather than any formal leadership role granted to them – and subsequently benefited from building relationships and trust with partners. KIs noted how it can take considerable time for a new coordinator to become familiar with the context, to establish themselves and gain the trust and respect of partners.

Questions were posed as to why only two coordinators were initially assigned to the Bangladesh context, as a third could have provided greater continuity during handover periods by increasing the likelihood of an experienced coordinator being in post. Moreover, at the time of the research an ECW-funded 'programme coordinator' position had been funded to support the current sector coordinators, reflecting an acknowledgement of the need for greater resources to serve the growing number of partners and level of coordination needs. While KIs noted that staffing so many roles would be challenging, there were clear indications that evaluating coordination needs and scaling sector coordinator positions accordingly can strengthen coordinated education planning and response.

There was an acceptance however, that some staff turnover of sector coordinators will be inevitable, and that there should therefore be more steps taken to mitigate its impact. A system in place designed to facilitate new coordinators into their positions, and to prevent things being dropped or gaps emerging, is the handover document. Each coordinator upon leaving their post is required to complete a document which details the context and ongoing tasks. The handover documents that have been obtained for

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this research varied in detail, although some were quite extensive. Some KIs expressed concern that the handover documents lack enough detail, while others felt the handover documents were fine considering that they were an aid rather than something that could create the bonds between key stakeholders that facilitate effective coordination. A sector coordinator suggested ‘[the handover documents were] ok, but only really worked for me as I had been here before with another organisation’.

The issues of high staff turnover were not limited to the education sector coordinator positions. KIIs suggest there have been three ISCG Senior coordinators since August 2018, and each new individual takes time to understand the challenges, build relations and to maintain continuity. There was also high turnover of CiC staff, which made relationship building difficult. Insufficient resourcing of leadership, therefore, was identified as one of the most significant root causes of coordination challenges and was unable to be entirely overcome through handover systems alone. Instead, investment in steps to ensure coordination staff remain in post for longer periods appeared to be the most effective means to strengthen coordinated planning and response.

### 5.3.3 Personality

KIs questioned about the role of personality felt that it played a role in the success of coordination, although there were often different interpretations of what was being discussed, with some responding to personality attributes and others focusing on what may be better defined as skills. KIs suggested that coordinators needed to be reliable, accountable, trustworthy, reachable, speak with authority and be approachable, friendly and sensitive.

It was noted, however, that the alignment of the personalities and approaches of those in key roles of coordination is most important. While some suggested such things should be overcome by professionalism, there was a general acknowledgement of the pressures and stresses involved in the various roles, and a tendency for personality traits to come to the fore. One KI suggested that context is equally influential in shaping the nature of this factor. It was felt that culturally people in Bangladesh prefer personal

relationships: ‘instead of sending an email, it is helpful to first give a call and ask, “can you do this”’. Those who prioritised these approaches, or who found them natural, were thought to be better suited to successfully coordinating in Bangladesh.

A KI suggested that personality also shapes an individual’s approach to a problem. They provided the example of approaches to advocacy, where some may stay quiet and believe it is best to work ‘under the radar’ to move agendas forward, others push agendas publicly to leverage stakeholders. When these approaches differed between individuals, coordination was felt to be more challenging.

The camp focal points – nominated from the NGOs working in the camps – act as a key avenue for the sector to engage with the CiCs for education. The skills they hold and their approach to the CiCs were highlighted as central to moving forward agendas. A KI described them as the ‘sector ambassadors’. In order to leverage these ambassadors to drive forward quality education for Rohingya, the sector undertook trainings with the focal points, using role play to highlight different means of advocating for education without confrontation. KIs who had participated in the training suggested it had made a significant difference, and they were utilising the skills in their focal point meetings.

These indications that personality can play a significant role in strengthening coordinated education planning and response highlight a need to ensure that staff with coordination duties have extensive experience building relationships with partners – ideally with experience of the cultures of the response context – and that training and support can help bridge divides.

### 5.3.4 How can coordination be improved?

- **Ensure a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities for a variety of scenarios in order to prevent tensions between partners.** Inevitably, there will be unforeseen scenarios, where staff training should instil strong partnerships, adaptability and complementarity as the foundation for coordination, rather than preconceived roles. It does not negate however, the need to ensure mandates are complementary and that clear

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processes are established for instances when they are not.

- **Ensure transparency over coordinators' institutional affiliations and various lines of accountability and responsibility.** These attempts are of particular importance when one or more of the respective organisations is involved in funding delivery. Embracing institutional identities while making clear the level of independence these institutions offer sector coordinators, as opposed to trying to deny affiliations, may provide opportunities to exploit the comparative advantages that each organisation's identity brings to coordination roles and ensures that lead agencies are accountable to sector coordinator processes and actions.
- **Ensure that formal means of coordination exist between different education clusters/sectors operating in the same country contexts.** In Bangladesh, there appeared to be room for strengthening links between coordination structures in Dhaka (education cluster and the ELCG) and the education sector in Cox's Bazar. While the Dhaka cluster and Cox's Bazar sector did not exist in the kind of hierarchal structure that exists in contexts with a sector and sub-sector, similar principles of coordination should be considered, and entail Skype groups, fixed call schedules, site visits, cross-site training activities and joint initiatives, with these being decided between the in-country coordinators.
- **Scale the coordination of human resources according to coordination needs assessments.** Doing so will help ensure that opportunities are not missed, particularly in the early stages of a crisis when precedents for future coordination are set.
- **Prioritise mechanisms to bridge handover periods.** New coordinators are arriving into highly complex, unique and politically sensitive environments, with multiple education stakeholders. An overlap between new and old coordinators is preferred, which is more likely in contexts provided additional human resources. Alternatively, detailed handover documents and a nominated contact in-country to facilitate transitions could prove helpful.

- **Ensure that staff with coordination duties have extensive experience building relationships with partners** – ideally with experience of the cultures of the response context. Training exercises are seen to be effective at building on these existing skill sets.

## 5.4 Equity

### 5.4.1 Managing difference

Managing difference between stakeholders proved paramount in Cox's Bazar. At the onset of the crisis, limited space for programming led to 'unfair allocations' and confusion over who should be prioritised for each area. At the beginning of the response the sector aimed to allocate zones determined by the projects organisations could fund, although adherence varied and inter-sector coordination of space proved challenging. One KI suggested, 'in the first nine months it was the Wild West, people were just putting down flags wherever they wanted and then they would try and build a fence around it'. A mapping was drawn up in late November 2017 but the high turnover of coordinators hindered a coherent plan. Today, camp space is identified in coordination with the sector based on need and the comparative advantage of the organisation, before being permitted by the CiC. At the time of the research, an ongoing process of clustering was taking place that aimed to ensure that each camp had equal coverage of activities for different competency levels and age groups and for equal periods of time to restore a degree of coordinated activities that were not able to be achieved at the onset of the crisis. KIs however, suggested that greater investment by all actors in the early phases could have greatly facilitated progress towards collective education outcomes over the period and reduced the need for the ongoing processes today that are hindered by organisations resisting requests to relinquish space or reorient activities.

Standardisation was most often cited as a key means of managing difference. Varying qualities of school facilities, teacher wages and teacher training led to tensions and, in some instances, refugees moved to other camps or attended multiple learning centres after learning of better opportunities elsewhere. Distribution of non-food

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items had also been seen to cause tensions in camps when they were limited to only one region. By establishing a Standards Working Group within the education sector, the sector managed to bring education response partners together and agree on a unified standards document. During observations of a camps focal point meeting, the standards were cited by a camp focal point who had heard that umbrellas, shoes, dresses and raincoats were being distributed in some areas by an INGO. It demonstrated both the need for partners to voluntarily adhere to the practices, but also the use of the standards processes as a means of raising concerns and holding organisations to account.

Despite the challenges involved in managing difference and the resources required, it was welcomed over homogeneity. FD7 procedures prevented many INGOs and donors from gaining access to the crisis, resulting in the majority of actors operating under the UNICEF umbrella. It proved a major challenge for the engagement of non-UN organisations and INGOs. According to an NNGO KI, this resulted in dependence on UNICEF for an efficient response, which frustrated partners when problems began to occur and alternative actors were not in place to fill or support partners in the gaps. At the same time, however, it could be argued that it created opportunities for local organisations that otherwise might not have had the opportunity to partner with UN agencies.

#### **5.4.2 Capacity of coordination partners**

While the capacity of partners was largely described as sufficient, in a few instances gaps in capacity were cited as a significant constraint to coordinated education planning and response. Challenges in using reporting tools such as Excel for completing the 5Ws hindered data collection and deterred some partners from using local actors for more complex tasks, such as surveys. Some national partners also struggled to engage in coordination meetings held in English due to the language limitations of the sector coordinators, and only on occasions were efforts made to include a translator.

Some of these limitations led partners to establish parallel systems for data collection. An NNGO had collected beneficiary-level data on the areas they were serving, including names of

students, sex, age, name of parents and whether the child was attending a learning centre, yet they had relied on a handwritten log due to a lack of computer equipment and training in how to use it, preventing the data ever reaching the IMs. An NGO worker expressed frustration over an occasion they had compiled datasets and brought it to the sector, only to be told the survey was ‘too simple’, and asked why another method had not been used.

IMs suggested they were providing training for new partners, which covered basic IT skills, but they had limited time available to offer courses. At the time of the research, only one IM was in post, which further hindered IM training opportunities. In order to support partners, a pool of six individuals from partner organisations had been established. When the IM could not find time to undertake training for new partners, the pool was used instead. On occasions, the pool would be used to offer training to partners where ongoing needs had been identified. According to the IM, the pool had been highly successful in increasing the capacity of partners. However, one NNGO suggested that even if these opportunities were made available to them, they would not have the time to take on capacity-building activities.

Outside the formal sector data collection activities, NNGOs in particular provided significant comparative advantages that increased the capacity of the sector. An NNGO KI described how they had far more capacity coordinating the rapid distribution of health information around learning centres when chickenpox broke out due to their networks in the camps. According to a KI, ‘it took the health and education sector 2 days to catch up with the activities we already had going on in the response’. LCMCs played a central role in facilitating this process who work directly with NGOs on a regular basis.

#### **5.4.3 National, sub-national and local stakeholders**

##### **Engagement with the government**

Government leadership was deemed to provide comparative advantages that can greatly benefit the sector. Yet engagement with the government

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proved to be challenging for the sector. Numerous KIs raised concerns over the perceived disconnection between the activities of the sector and the various government authorities. An NNGO notes that even though ‘as a sector, we make so many procedures, guidelines, tools, standards and quality guidelines’, bottlenecks and challenges emerge when engaging with the government over coordinating such a large response.

Through interviews with KIs in both the sector and the RRRC office, it appeared communication and coordination gaps remained. The DPEO were praised for their continued provision of teaching and learning materials to registered camps and visits to the learning centres, yet sector coordinators’ concerted efforts to engage with the DPEO and RRRC office have faced challenges, with calls or emails often not returned or responded to slowly. A DPEO official notes, ‘they don’t use our curriculum, our schools, we don’t work in camps’, suggesting that at the time of the research they did not see a need or have an incentive to coordinate activities. The same sentiments were echoed by a KI at the RRRC office, who suggested the DPEO does not need to have a major role in the education in camps and therefore has little need to coordinate.

Inconsistency in government engagement was seen when comparing across sectors. Education sector coordinators noted how they have been requesting meetings with a representative of the RRRC office but had received no reply. Conversely, in the protection sector a UNHCR staff member said that they have regular contact, often on a daily basis, directly with the same official that the education sector was trying to reach. When posing the question to an RRRC office KI, they shared the objectives of the sector, at one point noting, ‘those kids need to go to school, they need a curriculum, it needs to get going’, yet they did not see as great a need to prioritise coordination with the education sector as with other sectors.

These challenges had a number of consequences. First, it was indicated that the inability to formulate a closer working relationship meant there were often delays to processing sector requests and providing authorisation for changes in camp provisions

to the detriment of the agility required to effectively coordinate the response. Second, the sector missed opportunities for advocacy. Third, the comparative advantages that the national structures can bring, both in terms of education expertise but also in terms of identifying needs and coordinating the responses across sectors were not able to be fully utilised. Finally, it was felt that frustrations at the RRRC that occurred at various points over the crisis were in part the result of communication breakdowns that prevented the sector from explaining the nature of the challenges they face – particularly in terms of concerns raised over monitoring and evaluation (Krishnan, 2019) – and the attempts being made to mitigate them.

One of the successful means of bridging gaps with the government was through a Bangladeshi staff member. Initial attempts to interview KIs at the RRRC offices organised by the sector coordinators were unsuccessful. Eventually, it was tasked to a Bangladeshi employee from an international organisation, who quickly managed to schedule a meeting. On arrival, the RRRC official noted, ‘I had a call about this from [the employee], how could I say no’. The same staff member had facilitated the meetings with the DPEO and spent considerable time connecting with the various officials in the office before and after our meeting.

It became apparent that the presence of Bangladeshi staff integrated into the upper levels of the sector coordination mechanisms facilitated coordination with the DPEO and RRRC offices. When querying the approach with sector coordinators, they noted how Bangladeshi staff helped significantly and that having a representative of the sector working out of the RRRC office might be a means to bridge gaps. However, successes of other sectors coordinating with the government, namely the UNHCR protection section, may also provide opportunities for increased engagement through inter-sector collaboration.

### **Engagement with NNGOs and the Rohingya community**

Engaging NNGOs brought a multitude of advantages. Some of the larger, well established NNGOs were described as having good

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connections with the government and being favoured by key government officials that created effective conduits for joint agendas. A KI described one NNGO as ‘the first to do radical things and get approval – they provide a good barometer on which to assess what is possible’.

These engagements also brought a series of benefits for NGOs. A KI at an NNGO suggested that it provided access to resources that would not otherwise have been available and achieved a level of coordination that they would never have been able to resource alone, particularly for smaller organisations.

Overall, there were no significant issues reported over engagement between NNGOs and INGOs that can on occasion be observed in other contexts. That is of course not to deny their entire existence, but that they were not of great enough significance to have had enough triangulated data to report on these dimensions. Many of the NNGOs are large scale and with significant experience in the international system. INGOs also regularly hired Bangladeshi staff, both as part of their chosen practice and due to challenges obtaining VISAs for international staff which appeared to mitigate cultural and language challenges.

Engagement with the Rohingya community happened primarily through NGOs operating in the camps. NNGOs explained how the LCMCs acted as an important mechanism for bringing key members of the community together and coordinating learning centre activities, as well as passing on information to the sector. A concerning absence of women’s voices in the LCMCs were observed however, with none of the female members of the LCMCs attending the meetings held by the researchers.

Sector coordinators also took steps to involve Rohingya refugees at various working group meetings. At a camp’s focal point meeting, a Rohingya refugee hired by a national NGO had been asked to participate, but issues in getting a pass for them to leave the camp had prevented their attendance, reflecting ongoing administrative problems.

Moreover, while there was a strong presence of female teachers, at the level of the teacher trainers, it continued to be a male-dominated environment which led to equity concerns. As a result, it appeared that female teachers often

remained silent during trainings. Some KIs also felt that the absence of women in senior roles has meant that certain issues on the ground, including gender-specific obstacles for adolescent girls, have yet to receive the attention they deserve. Conversely, concern was raised by one KI that quotas and other mechanisms adopted by the sector risked changing gender norms too rapidly for the communities to accept without dangers of backlash and other negative consequences.

#### **5.4.4 How could coordination be improved?**

**Sector standards were cited as a substantial benefit of sector participation.** There establishment both incentivised partners to coordination and helped reduce risk of tension among beneficiaries dissatisfied with unequal provisions.

**Creating a pool of interested partners to offer trainings is seen as effective at bridging capacity gaps without a need for significant resources.** While not a substitute for formal capacity-building activities, it provides a valuable addition.

**Strengthening communication and coordination with government actors can create a shared understanding of challenges and help provide a more positive image of the response.** It is important to note that this task is not the sole responsibility of the sector. Actors at other levels, including the HoSOG and those in Dhaka, need to use their comparative advantages to leverage change. Nevertheless, the sector could benefit from having local staff in roles of responsibility – which has been seen as effective at bridging divides – and using other sectors comparative advantages either as conduits for communication or to assist in establishing new links.

**Further engage with the gender dimensions of coordination.** Concerns over adopting quotas and pushing gender equality through coordination mechanisms should not prevent further engagement on the issue. A ‘negotiated approach’ should ‘focus on what is important to influential local players, develop constituencies and work to build on positive practice’ (Cooper, 2010). This might involve engaging with customary leaders, particularly men, to gain social legitimacy for norms and principles around gender equality and avoid backlash.

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# 6 The ‘so what’ of coordination in Bangladesh

*So what* does coordinated education planning and response contribute to better education and other collective outcomes for children and young people affected by crises?

Coordinated planning and response is not an end in itself. Coordination activities aim to provide a series of improvements to humanitarian responses that enhance their ability to achieve collective education outcomes. As identified in the global analysis framework (ODI, 2020) accompanying this case study, there are many methodological challenges to measuring whether coordinated education planning and response provides an overall improvement to a response. What can be identified, however, is anecdotal evidence that speaks to the pros and cons of coordinated education planning and response which can enrich our understanding of how coordination relates to the objectives of education partners. This section examines the ‘so what’ of coordination in Bangladesh, reflecting on some of the outcomes and impacts of the coordination mechanisms shared by the KIs.

The global analysis framework accompanying this case study notes two specific frameworks for analysing the effectiveness and impact of coordination – the State of the Humanitarian System (SOHS), which adapted the OECD DAC framework (ALNAP, 2018), and the ECW outcomes. The OECD DAC criteria represent a widely used metric to measure humanitarian responses across sectors and have been adapted as part of the recent SOHS report to reflect more recent trends in humanitarian responses to education (ALNAP, 2018). The ECW outcomes are focused on concrete educational outcomes: equity and gender equality; access; continuity; protection; and quality (ECW, 2018a).

The information provided in this section was largely gathered by directly asking KIs to provide anecdotes of effective coordinated education planning and response. KIs were encouraged to share anecdotes on any topic, and we made no explicit attempts to guide them towards any of the categories outlined in our framework. Most of the anecdotal evidence speaks to broad improvements to the humanitarian response and assumes subsequent broad and long-term benefits to the education response, while a smaller body of evidence provides examples of a direct impact on education. This section sees the value of both in informing our understanding of coordinated planning and response and therefore captures both. It organises the results by the SOHS DAC criteria and includes a description of each criterion at the opening of each section. At the end of the section, Figure 6 disaggregates the findings by both SOHS DAC criterion and educational outcome.

## 6.1 Coverage

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which action by the international humanitarian system reaches all people in need* (ALNAP, 2018: 35).

Coverage for children aged four to 14 years old has significantly improved, yet at the time of writing there are still many children in need of education, and there is a gap in coverage for adolescents and youth (SEG, 2019). Recognising the shortfall in education needs, the RRRC, during a Sector meeting in November 2018, recommended that the education budget should be increased the following year, leading to the education sector’s funding being increased in the JRP.

Ensuring that humanitarian action reaches *all* people in need requires understanding which

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subgroups are currently under-represented and how best to combine resources to target them going forward. Inter-sector coordination has played an important role. For example, to help improve attendance for adolescent girls between the ages of 11 and 14, child protection teams have collaborated with education partners to advise parents to help mitigate safety concerns and increase awareness of the instrumental benefits of educating adolescent girls. Coordination of crisis-affected people in the camps has also been critical, particularly through regular meetings between LCMCs and parents, especially when bolstered by support from mahjis (Rohingya community leaders) and imams.

Coordination by education implementation partners has also led to improved coverage in other sectors beyond education. In one instance, NGOs in a camp were able to communicate quickly through schools about an outbreak of chickenpox and other health issues. They perceived greater agility to get health provisions delivered in schools. An NGO managed to lead during the chickenpox outbreak, provide training materials, training workers, and deploying over 200 workers to visit all temporary learning centres and women's spaces in the camp within 24 hours. In contrast, it took the health sector several days to pass the information on to the intended recipients.

## 6.2 Relevance and appropriateness

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which the assistance and protection that the international humanitarian system provides addresses the most important needs of recipients (as judged both by humanitarian professionals and by crisis-affected people themselves) (ALNAP, 2018: 35).*

Coordination has also resulted in tailored, needs-based responses in education provision. In one instance, an NGO reported the need for shoes and umbrellas, which UNICEF pursued and provided. This opened an avenue for advocacy and a growing circle of trust within the sector. However, a camp focal point later noted that this created tensions on the ground as some camps were not provided with supplies.

A positive example of coordination was related to reducing disaster risk (Box 3), in terms of responding to a need. Lack of coordination early in the response had led to some learning centres being built in flood-prone areas. Coordination might have avoided this problem through engaging not only with the CiC but also with technical experts. More specifically, coordination with the disaster risk management and shelter sectors could have resulted in knowledge around which areas to build learning centres, based on the velocity of water and other hazard considerations.

## 6.3 Coherence

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which actors in the international humanitarian system act in compliance with humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law, and the degree to which they are able to influence states and non-state armed groups to respect humanitarian principles and conform to IHL (ALNAP, 2018: 35).*

**Most KIs noted positive change in the coordination environment over the last few months.** Initially, for example, there were disagreements on the use of the national curriculum, which is prohibited by the Government for the camps. Some partners responded to this by lobbying for the use of the national curriculum without adequate attention at the time devoted to developing an alternative plan, which was a source of tension. This does not mean that the humanitarian community should ignore its responsibility to draw the attention of the government to its international commitment and obligations, such as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Indeed, it should be persistently advocated in light of international humanitarian laws. The concern instead was that this was seen to be prioritised over immediate needs through the LCFA. Over time, working groups were formed within the sector: one to coordinate the development of LCFA and another to develop standards for the sector. The formation of these working groups is important as it allows a smaller group of partners to work on specific issues, reducing the need for all sector partners to always convene. However, the LCFA for levels 1 and 2 was awaiting approval from

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the government and translation for months, despite the Guidelines for Information Education Programme having recently been approved. Standards have been more of a success, having been established for the temporary learning centres and agreed upon by all partners.

**Coordination has also helped the response to situations where there was non-compliance with humanitarian standards on the ground** (see Box 3). There were instances reported of madrasas being used as learning spaces, contravening the standards. At the same time, madrasas are respected by the Rohingya, are an integral part of community religious life, and are better attended

than learning centres (CBES, 2018). The overlap between madrasa and school shifts is also a concern and led to the formation of a madrasa working group around how best to attempt to meet education needs of refugee children. In another instance, megaphones were used to disseminate messages discriminating against women, by supporting gender-based violence and arguing for reduced mobility for women and reduced access to recreational centres and women-friendly spaces. This dissemination was met by protection interventions, from protection and education partners and the CiC, within camps and at a higher level in compliance with humanitarian principles.

### **Box 3 Inter-sector coordination to minimise hazard risks**

The TWIG on durable learning centres offers a good example of coordination that is needs-based for heavy rains and the monsoon season (around June to October), and is well-tailored to the context. The group comprised shelter and education experts as well as site management from camps. Members collaborated over half a year to produce self-contained practical documents on designing learning centres that could withstand a range of low to high hazard situations. The design also responded to needs that emerged from discussions within sectors and camp teachers, for example around the need for a space for teachers within the classroom that was separate from students and could be used to store materials. At the moment, there are plans underway to prepare for 250 learning centres using low and medium hazard designs.

Lessons learned from this coordination exercise included the importance of having core members regularly involved in TWIG meetings to reduce miscommunication and also the additional management tasks that could emerge with larger groups. Members also spoke of the need for a buffer of funds for flexibility if developments did not go according to plan, and some NGOs or contractors were required to take on additional work.

In another example, an NGO started child protection services in the camp and observed considerable trauma in the children, so then proceeded to provide psychosocial support, and within a few months included education activities. Though this approach did not integrate protection and education from the beginning, it nevertheless provided positive outcomes whereby these areas were integrated. Ensuring adequate quality of child protection services required partnerships, for example with the Universal Relief Team, who trained with international trainers, knew the context and had regular visits on site for continuity. An outcome observed here was that, while many children were originally perceived to be depressed and sometimes with erratic behaviours, six months of psychosocial support and learning resulted in positive discipline impacts. For example, while the method of engagement with children began using directive methods, such as individually distributing food to children, with regular engagement a more facilitative process began where children would take their own food.

While the above examples convey positive outcomes, there are areas where education coordination has yet to result in positive change. For example, education in the host country's language should be a critical need of refugees, but remains prohibited. Education support for the youth (15 to 24-year-olds) is also in the planning stages, but has yet to be adequately provided. These pose additional questions on relevance and appropriateness that remain to be addressed.

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## 6.4 Accountability and participation

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which actors within the international humanitarian system can be held to account by crisis-affected people, and the degree to which crisis-affected people are able to influence decisions related to assistance and protection (ALNAP, 2018).*

Joint understanding of roles and responsibilities and adhering to benchmarks can help improve the coordination process and promote accountability. Already, the protection sector has established quality benchmarks and adopted a peer-reviewing process to assess its success, offering a blueprint for the education sector to follow.

**Accountability may be strengthened across levels through the inclusion of crisis-affected people in decision making.** A success in this regard occurred in June 2018, when half of the chosen representatives, including the camp leader, in the Shalbagan camp elections were women. An *Al Jazeera* article on the election outcome quoted Nur Begum, a Rohingya NGO, as saying that ‘she considers the “women-led system as more beneficial than the previous mazi way ... The women succeeded in engaging more people from the community to volunteer with NGOs” [and the new system] has made it easier for me as a woman to raise [the] issues we face’ (Alsaafin, 2018). This shows the importance of ensuring adequate gender representation in the coordination process, both from an intrinsic and, as here, an instrumental perspective.

At the same time, however, these successes must be balanced by the potential backlash against women due to patriarchal norms and practices. In January, women and girls accessing education faced threats from within their community, and teachers given a deadline to stop. In these instances, coordination of the sector has been strong and timely. At camp level, a referral mechanism was established in response to these threats. The protection and education sectors also convened to ensure that implementing partners would not change practices to stop hiring women and reinforce adverse gender norms. The RRRC and CiCs and humanitarian actors met with some religious leaders and mahjis and the threat was unofficially lifted. This example, though,

has led some KIs question whether the increased participation of women in public spheres has happened too fast for society to adapt to. The recommendations in Section 8 offer some ways forward amid the continued backlash to women’s economic empowerment.

## 6.5 Effectiveness

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which humanitarian operations meet their stated objectives, in a timely manner and at an acceptable level of quality (ALNAP, 2018).*

As we have seen, even where education access may have improved in the camps, this does not always translate into real improvement for some. Adolescent girls remain under-represented in learning centres, in spite of efforts to improve their enrolment through, for example, representation as teachers in camps. Women are often silent in LCMCs despite their attendance. Even within the teaching hierarchy, technical officers are mostly men, and so women often lack confidence to speak during trainings. KIs noted that having female role models at all levels of the coordination process was imperative for improving outcomes for education, particularly for Rohingya girls who may otherwise not develop aspirations or seek opportunities on a par with Rohingya boys. Recognising this need, education sector partners have made efforts to ensure quotas of women within the coordination process across hierarchies. However, this coordination has focused so far on the presence of women, without adequate steps to engage with men and collectively ensure a supportive environment.

While quality concerns remain, there are many positive examples of how coordination has led to operations meeting their objectives promptly. Many partners rely on personal rather than institutional relationships, which they view as a cultural preference. As such, instead of sending an email, they may first call a partner or send them a text message. These personal phone-based and face-to-face relationships have helped ensure timely dissemination of information, which in turn has helped build trust and improve the strength of relationships conducive to coordination.

Another recent example of a timely response was when a learning centre was temporarily

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closed by Rohingya community members. In response, the camp focal point spoke to site managers and implementing partners to first understand the situation, discovering that it was a localised quarrel between a few students that had escalated to parents. The focal point then spoke to LCMC members, imams and parents, mediating a dialogue so that community members would better understand the ripple effects of school closure on students who were not involved in the quarrel. This space for open dialogue facilitated conflict resolution, through multiple stakeholder engagement and the close contact of the LCMC during the process.

In the example above, the involvement of parents in the conflict resolution process was also key. Parents meetings have been an important coordination mechanism to send messages to learners and through which to advocate for education. Unfortunately, many Rohingya parents themselves did not attend school in their home contexts, where they faced pervasive discrimination, and so do not always understand the value of education. Camp focal points in these instances are important in raising awareness to advocate for education alongside the LCMCs. These on-the-ground actors also offer a mechanism to ensure timely dissemination of sector-wide decisions, such as reducing the number of school shifts from three to two and grouping the learning centres by cluster to avoid duplication.

While the examples above entail prompt responses enabled by coordination across hierarchies, one long-standing unsolved challenge is communication around the LCFA, starting with its origins in Dhaka. This persists in spite of months of coordination meetings and curriculum development. The issue here is that, while education sector coordinators in camps may have produced effective tools for learning through collaboration, the final step of government approval to roll out the LCFA after translation took months, though promisingly has now been given for levels 1 and 2. Many KIs, however, were not clear on where the LCFA currently stood in terms of what had been achieved and what remained to be done, suggesting that lines of communication, particularly when facing administrative bottlenecks, need to be strengthened to ensure that all partners remain informed and involved.

## 6.6 Complementarity

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which the international humanitarian system recognises and supports the capacities of national and local actors, in particular governments and civil society organisations (ALNAP, 2018).*

In spite of these continued bottlenecks, the education sector has persevered in attempts to strengthen coordination with government agencies and national and local actors around education. However, there has been relatively little engagement with RRRC on education, though ample efforts in recent months to improve lines of communication. Coordination with local and national NGOs has been more conducive to capacity building. The education sector regularly offers orientation around information management and other learning that benefits the processes and efficiency of coordination. There has also been role play involving stakeholders during meetings, which has helped provide collective solutions to tangible issues. For example, in one situation, a focal point and sector partner had argued in front of the CiC over who was supposed to present updates. Through role plays, the local actors decided to meet bilaterally to discuss coordination issues beforehand, so that the focal point would be empowered in front of the CiC and so yield improved outcomes.

The capacity of Rohingya refugees on the ground has also been improved. For example, teacher learning circles are helping to ensure continuous development for teachers in the camps. Over the last 1.5 years, all partners have had trainings and refreshers. However, the experience of teachers is generally low and so they continue to have low exposure to good teaching practice. In this context, several partners have come together to develop a space through which to train master trainers of implementing partners in order to enhance meetings of teacher learning circles. This initiative has been well accepted by Rohingya and host-community teachers. Engagement by reflective, non-prescriptive practitioners was crucial in the ultimate achievements of coordination for the community.

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## 6.7 Sufficiency

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which the resources available to the international humanitarian system are sufficient to cover humanitarian needs (ALNAP, 2018).*

As noted earlier, the education sector target leaves a large share of unreached people in need, indicating that space and funding are insufficient for the scale of the crises. It is unlikely that sufficient resources will ever be available to cover humanitarian needs, but coordination is expected to help maximise the impact of the resources available and to ensure the best possible identification of needs and prioritisation of response actions. In this context, coordination with the RRRC has helped to ensure that resources continue to be earmarked for the education sector and are suitably prioritised, and not reduced in the coming year.

Another key aspect of coordination in maintaining resources at their current levels is the alignment by partners of needs with their areas of strength. For example, some NGOs focus on enrolling younger groups as they have a background in primary school education. Even so, youth and adolescent girls also remain largely under-represented in learning initiatives, though this is beginning to change through discussions in sector meetings which have repeatedly raised these issues, and implementing partners slowly adjusting to reach these target groups.

## 6.8 Efficiency

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which humanitarian outputs are produced for the lowest possible amount of inputs (ALNAP, 2018).*

A concern that repeatedly emerged in interviews concerned duplication. Particularly in the early months of the refugee influx, implementing partners were often building learning centres without consulting other NGOs. One informant noted more recently that a lead agency partner had established a learning centre in their camp and were trying to include children who were already enrolled elsewhere within their learning centres. This was a common experience among KIs and was attributed to misaligned incentives around contracting and

delivery that drive partners to try to meet their target willy-nilly.

Improved coordination had led to greater efficiency in many of these situations while physical space limitations continue to be a challenge. Some organisations have been mapping who is not in schools in their areas. Another KI noted that under the leadership of CiCs and site management, coordination between these actors has improved. The Facility Registration System is a key tool for data sharing that has helped nurture coordination around learning centre establishment. The system helps assess needs within camps around where refugees are located, and so helps inform who will implement projects. An implementing partner's monitoring and evaluation team has also been going to camps to collect information and share it with the sector, so reducing the need for duplicate surveys. Development of attendance lists has also helped nurture this ground-up management and needs assessment to ensure improved access to learning. There are also efforts underway to introduce beneficiary-level reporting, which one KI believed could lead to a 20% reduction in error.

**Cross-sector collaboration is also resulting in integrated approaches that capitalise on synergies.** For example, child protection and education sectors are jointly working on multipurpose centres for children and adolescents, with education and learning elements such as foundational skills courses. This began with a joint needs assessment by both sectors. For child protection specialists, the drive to engage stems from a recognition of the importance of mainstreaming child protection across all sectors, which in turn requires integrated documents to offer a blueprint for action.

## 6.9 Connectedness

*SOHS DAC definition: the degree to which the international humanitarian system articulates with development, resilience, risk reduction and peacebuilding (ALNAP, 2018).*

As in other crisis contexts, supporting national and local actors in Bangladesh is complicated by the political agendas that can steer education projects. These can undermine the effectiveness of coordination in terms of development objectives.

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However, amid these political constraints, *there are stories of hope seen through positive coordination efforts that have led to improved connectedness*. An example is in education sector coordination in an attempt to mitigate risks of natural hazards. Certain aspects of coordination proved important in enhancing connectedness:

- Data management output was perceived to be effective, through flood and landslide mapping which helped improve evidence-based advocacy efforts and raise awareness of risks for other sectors to heed.
- Improved advocacy of the sector together also helped push back attempts to use learning centres as shelters and, in the process, close schools. However, it has been agreed in consultation with ISCG, RRRC, education sector partners, CiC – and, as was the case in 2018 – that the learning centres could be used as emergency shelters for 72 hours in the case of a disaster.
- Communication trees from the teacher to the education coordinator were developed to ensure education continuity amid monsoons when camp focal points and partners were unable to contact the LCMC and parents due to reduced mobile connectivity. Examples of calls were for roofs being blown off learning centres and the need for immediate responses.

Other examples from the interviews included attempts to bridge the link between immediate education needs and technical and vocational training that could improve labour market links and so be conducive to longer-term well-being. In one instance, two implementing partners coordinated to provide training around sewing. Students requested sewing machines after the livelihood training, which partners were unable to provide. However, the circle of trust was not lost here given the reputation of the implementation partner and the likelihood that if provision of machines were to be approved at a later date, the initial batch of trainees would be likely to be among the first recipients.

While the above highlights a positive example of coordination for youth populations, it should be noted that leaving youth with little, if any, educational support increases the risk of social

unrest. The failure in coordination to help fill this gap would contribute to heightening such risks.

## 6.10 Impact

*SOHS DAC definition: The degree to which humanitarian action produces (intentionally or unintentionally) positive longer-term outcomes for the people and societies receiving support (ALNAP, 2018).*

The reliance of education partners on government approval has created bottlenecks in service provision in the sector. This more generally reflects weak links between structures responsible for response coordination and development coordination in the education sector. This led to delays, for example in the LCFA being adopted, as noted earlier. However, as one implementing partner noted, relying solely on government approval in the presence of bottlenecks might result in little action in the immediate term. The partner emphasised that ‘coordination can happen in meetings, but we need to light a fire under ourselves to just get it done’. This attitude characterised much present action around developing curriculums and other tools to improve the quality of learning.

The narratives in preceding sections speak to the various positive longer-term outcomes that coordination in education provision has supported, particularly around gender and in a multi-hazard context. Examples are summarised in Figure 6.

## 6.11 Linking coordination to education outcomes

The global analysis framework proposed a framework that combined the SOHS OECD DAC criteria and the ECW collective education outcomes to bridge the gap between improvements in humanitarian and development responses that could contribute to conditions conducive to improved education outcomes, and the actual education outcomes observed. This framework is now populated with the data found during the Bangladesh case study and shown in Figure 6. This data will be combined at the end of the research project with that from other case studies and utilised in an analysis.

## Box 4 Examples of positive impacts from coordinated humanitarian action

### Risk mitigation in a multi-hazard context

The effectiveness of coordination at camp level in times of heightened or overlapping crises, as evidenced through the chickenpox outbreak. Teachers' proximity with children in learning centres helped identify the issue at an early stage of the outbreak, while the presence of the education implementing partner on the ground helped mobilise a rapid coordinated response.

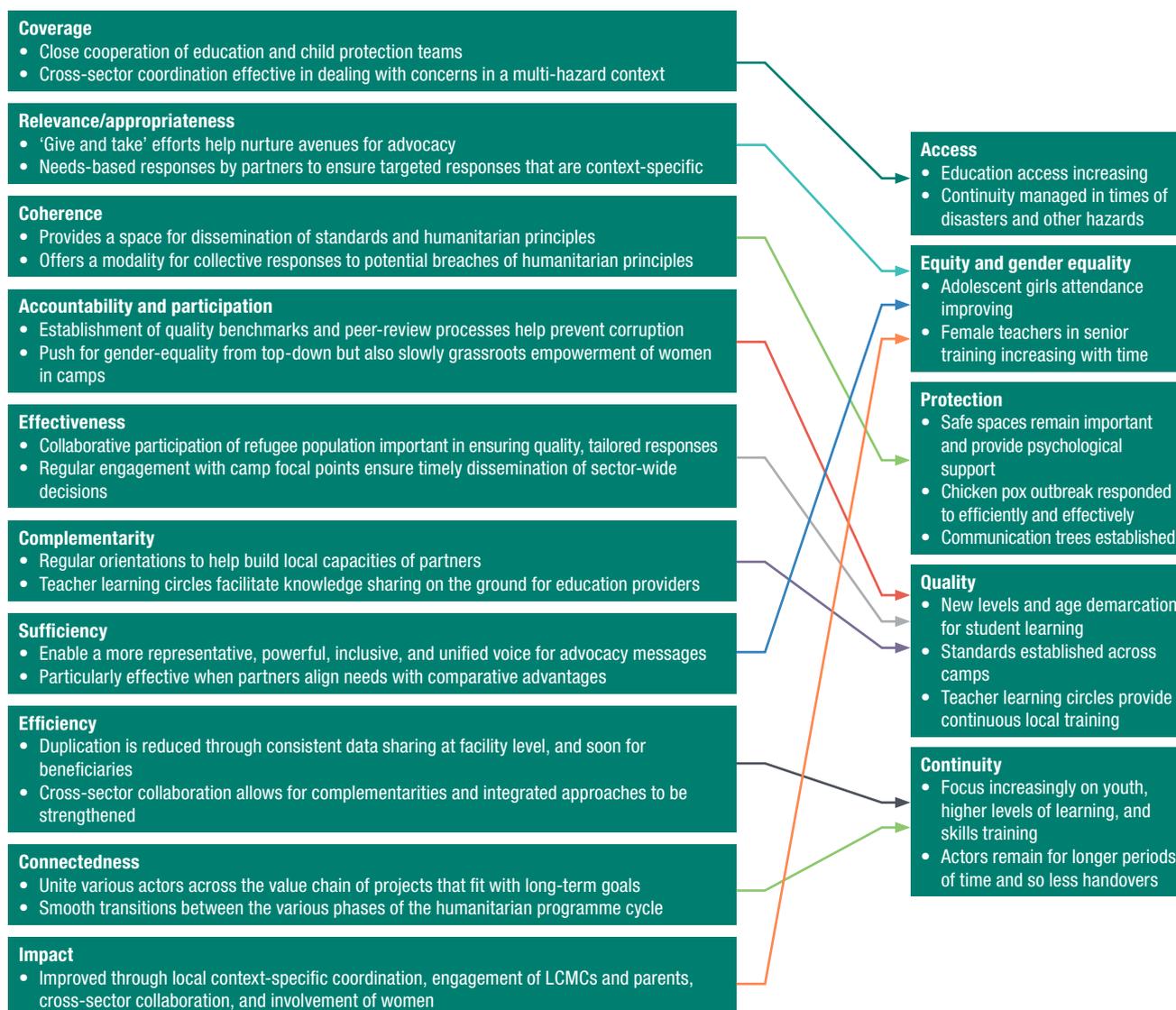
The Technical Working Group of shelter, education and other sector and site management partners to ensure the sustainability of learning centres and the advocacy that resulted in push back around attempts to co-opt learning spaces as shelters during disasters.

### Promoting gender equality on the ground

Meetings of LCMCs and parents, and education and child protection partners, resulting in an ongoing increase in attendance of adolescent girls aged 11–14 in learning centres, due to increasing awareness around benefits of attendance and helping mitigate safety concerns. Support of imams and mahjis has also been instrumental in nurturing acceptance and helping reduce backlash.

The slow but increasing presence of women teacher trainers (especially where supported by engagement of Rohingya men), and election of women representatives in Shalbagan, which has led to more community engagement and raising women-specific concerns.

Figure 6 Linking education coordination to education outcomes in Cox's Bazar



Source: Authors' analysis using SOHS DAC framing criteria

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# 7 Conclusion

Bangladesh provides a unique example of coordinated education planning and response. The challenges in providing to the recent influx of over 400,000 Rohingya school-age children in the world's largest refugee camp are only half the story. The GoB, in preventing refugees from accessing public schools and national curriculums and by initially requesting that IOM rather than UNHCR co-lead the response, has brought about a unique coordination mechanism and tested the humanitarian and development mechanisms in new ways. This case study, therefore, has focused on coordination experiences for the Rohingya response in Bangladesh over the period of the crisis from current and previous staff, in order to identify lessons on how actors can improve coordination to strengthen education outcomes for children and young people affected by crises.

A key finding of this case study relates to the clarity of leadership roles and the part played by mandates, MoUs and other advance agreements. Circumstances in the Rohingya response – namely the GoB's initial preference for IOM rather than UNHCR to coordinate the most recent influx – required partners to come together to adopt an untraditional way of coordinating. In doing so, the importance of advance agreements became apparent. Tensions emerged between a few key staff within UNICEF and UNHCR due either to unclear roles and responsibilities, competition over leadership roles or reluctance to relinquish areas felt to be their responsibility. NNGOs and INGOs became frustrated and began to side with one organisation over another. Other stakeholders began to operate in Bangladesh without clear understanding of these unorthodox systems, coordinating with one of the organisations and unintentionally excluding another, creating wedges between partners in-country. The progress made in Bangladesh and the achievements of the education sector since then are testament to the work of those involved.

Yet some of these challenges in coordination as a result of the lack of clarity over leadership roles could have been prevented by ensuring mandates, advanced agreements and strategies are complementary and understood by those in key coordination roles.

There will, however, always be limits to what advance agreements can foresee and achieve. While the numerous tools, agreements and mechanisms established play a vital role in facilitating coordination and are vital requisites to strong coordination, it was ultimately the investment in the human resources that overcame the challenges in Bangladesh. Providing training and scaling human resources for coordination roles appeared therefore to be a significant step towards strengthening coordination.

In terms of coordination with partners, time and capacity had been the greatest inhibitor of coordination. Partners spoke of how their levels of involvement in coordination were always weighed against other responsibilities and primarily participated due to the value the sector currently provides. In other instances, however, partners were found to be spending time attending meetings, but with little knowledge of the content or any incentive to flag their concerns. In these instances, forming strong relationships and garnering anonymous feedback, as demonstrated by a 2019 sector survey, appeared effective.

Bangladeshi staff in various coordination roles proved to hold the attributes required for sector coordination roles and brought significant comparative advantages that helped bridge some of the challenges identified. KIs suggested that when sufficiently supported, Bangladeshi staff were generally more likely to remain in post, to form strong relationships with partners and government actors and to provide language skills that help improve understanding in coordination meetings. Incorporating Bangladeshi staff in a sector

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coordination role would allow human resources to be scaled and bring a new set of skills that holds promise for further strengthening coordinated education planning and response. Moreover, it would help further align the response with the Grand Bargain, an agreement between large donors and humanitarian agencies aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.

Despite the challenges the Bangladesh context presented, it provided an opportunity to ‘do things differently’ by revisiting and revising advance agreements and standard practices (Doyle et al., 2019). A limit to this research project is that the country case studies draw on the same normative response frameworks, which may be key to

some of the constraints of coordinated education planning and response. If proposed reforms to the coordination mechanisms in Bangladesh materialise, these will represent a valuable opportunity to begin comparative research to identify pros and cons between normative approaches to education responses.

Finally, the ‘so what’ section of this case study illustrates that, while coordination requires investment, its returns in Bangladesh are high. There is a series of examples of its contribution to collective outcomes, including improving the relevance of education for refugees, increasing adolescent girls’ enrolment and ensuring continuity of education.

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# 8 Recommendations

This section covers key recommendations for strengthening coordinated education planning and response in Bangladesh. It poses suggestions that bridge issues across the four factors outlined, outlined in Table 3.

- 1. Invest in coordination.** Coordination is increasingly highlighted as a central pillar of effective and efficient humanitarian responses. Yet despite funding already being available for two full-time dedicated sector coordinators and two full-time dedicated Information Management Officers, investments in systems and human resources in Bangladesh do not appear to correlate with the emphasis placed on coordination. Recent plans to provide an ECW-funded programme coordinator to support sector coordinator duties highlights progress in this area, but also that regular assessments of coordination needs and scale-up are necessary. Coordinators' days consists of more than reporting, information management and other measurable outputs. Recognising the multiple complex roles they hold begins to highlight a series of time-consuming tasks, which without sufficient support, training and scale will prevent further benefits of coordination being achieved.
- 2. Create a Bangladeshi sector coordinator role.** Suitable local staff with responsibility for coordination within the sector brought a series of benefits, many of which fulfil the recommendations listed in this research. As noted in previous research in Cox's Bazar (UNICEF, 2018), opportunities exist to explore innovative means of integrating Bangladeshis' into coordination roles, including secondments and mentoring.

Yet establishment of a permanent Bangladeshi coordinator role holds most promise, as it aligns with the recommendation to scale coordination human resources and ensures that national staff become standard features of EiE. Benefits of such a position include:

- Reducing impacts of high staff turnover by putting in place staff more likely to remain in post and improving the chances of there being an individual with experience in the context in position upon arrival of new coordinators.
- Improving understanding of local partner capacities and providing resources and language skills to begin to fill gaps.
- Helping facilitate communication with government actors.
- Providing cultural insight and more equal leadership representation at the coordinator level.
- Further aligning the response with the Grand Bargain.

Stakeholders would need to be ready to invest time in building capacities and knowledge around the pre-established coordination mechanisms and ensuring that the comparative advantages of the Bangladeshi coordinator are harnessed.

- 3. Use Bangladesh as an opportunity to explore alternative coordination structures.** A limit to this research project is that the country case studies draw on the same normative response frameworks that may be key to some of the constraints of coordinated education planning and response. If proposed reforms to the coordination mechanisms in Bangladesh materialise, there will be a valuable opportunity to explore alternatives to the normative coordination approaches to EiE.

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**Table 3 Summary of recommendations provided throughout this report**

Factor	Recommendations
Predisposition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Review MoUs and other advance agreements between organisations, which outline different coordination structures and the role of different actors prior to crises.</b> The review should cover scenarios such as that in Bangladesh, and ensure that structures are understood, adopted and accepted by stakeholders during emergencies. Mandates, MoUs and other advance agreements are the foundation on which coordination mechanisms build. While not all eventualities can be foreseen, and adaptability will always be required, ensuring that activities undertaken under the respective mandates are complementary, understood and accepted ensures the integrity of these foundations.</li><li><b>2. Improve processes for collaboration between child protection and education sectors.</b> Bangladesh is not the only context that may present overlap between these two sectors, yet the coordination processes and mechanisms between each are often left to the sectors and inter-sector coordinators to develop independently in-country. Establishing standard coordination practices by drawing on examples of successful practice elsewhere will help normalise cooperation for new and existing crises and lay a basis on which sectors can build.</li><li><b>3. Ensure coordination at the onset of crises creates a healthy precedent.</b> Previous experience in coordinating within the Cox's Bazar systems can have a significant impact on coordination over extended periods of time. Ensuring that the structures that will serve coordination over extended periods are established early and prioritised to create positive precedents will ensure that strong coordination remains central to long-term responses.</li></ol>
Incentives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Work towards constant evaluation and feedback mechanisms from participants, which are vital in ensuring the quality of coordination.</b> This is because participation in coordination mechanisms may not always equate to strengthened coordination but to token involvement. An anonymous Coordination Performance Monitoring survey (based on the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring tool) undertaken in May 2019 has garnered rich feedback and key recommendations from partners for increasing the efficiency of coordination practices. These surveys should be undertaken at fixed regular intervals as a standard practice in responses.</li><li><b>2. Ensuring that meetings run efficiently and are appropriate to the participants will help strengthen coordination.</b> While there were clearly multiple strengths across partners that can be drawn on to support the development of the sector, numerous NGOs highlighted that there were too many requests to participate in sector-wide activities, which puts strain on their already limited time. Ensuring that invitations are issued to all partners with clarity over the agenda and whether their attendance is required or requested can help maximise efficiencies and perceptions of sectors. While not suitable in all instances, breaking meetings up into thematic slots could allow participants to focus attendance on relevant parts of meetings, reducing the cost in terms of time, and lowering the number of simultaneous participants.</li></ol>
Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Ensure a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities for a variety of scenarios in order to prevent tensions between partners.</b> Inevitably, there will be unforeseen scenarios, where staff training should instil strong partnerships, adaptability and complementarity as the foundation for coordination, rather than preconceived roles. It does not negate, however, the need to ensure mandates are complementary and that clear processes are established for instances when they are not.</li><li><b>2. Ensure transparency over coordinators' institutional affiliations and various lines of accountability and responsibility.</b> These attempts are of particular importance when one or more of the respective organisations is involved in funding delivery. Embracing institutional identities while making clear the level of independence these institutions offer sector coordinators, as opposed to trying to deny affiliations may provide opportunities to exploit comparative advantages that each organisation's identity brings to coordination roles and ensures that lead agencies are accountable to sector coordinator processes and actions.</li><li><b>3. Ensure that formal means of coordination exist between different education clusters/sectors operating in the same country contexts.</b> In Bangladesh, there appeared to be room for strengthening links between coordination structures in Dhaka (education cluster and the ELCG) and the education sector in Cox's Bazar. While the Dhaka cluster and Cox's Bazar sector did not exist in a hierarchal structure as exists in contexts with a sector and sub-sector, similar principles of coordination should be considered, and entail Skype groups, fixed call schedules, site visits, cross-site training activities and joint initiatives, with these being decided between the in-country coordinators.</li></ol>

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**Table 3 continued**

Factor	Recommendations
Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>4. Scale the coordination of human resources according to coordination needs assessments.</b> Doing so will help ensure that opportunities are not missed, particularly in the early stages of a crisis when precedents for future coordination are set.</li><li><b>5. Prioritise mechanisms to bridge handover periods.</b> New coordinators are arriving into highly complex, unique and politically sensitive environments, with multiple education stakeholders. An overlap between new and old coordinators is preferred, which is more likely in contexts provided additional human resources. Alternatively, detailed handover documents and a nominated contact in-country to facilitate transitions could prove helpful.</li><li><b>6. Ensure that staff with coordination duties have extensive experience building relationships with partners</b> – ideally with experience of the cultures of the response context. Training exercises are seen to be effective at building on these existing skill sets.</li></ol>
Equity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Sector standards were cited as a substantial benefit of sector participation.</b> Their establishment both incentivised partners to coordinate and helped reduce risk of tension among beneficiaries dissatisfied with unequal provisions.</li><li><b>2. Creating a pool of interested partners to offer trainings is seen as effective at bridging capacity gaps without a need for significant resources.</b> While not a substitute for formal capacity-building activities, it provides a valuable addition.</li><li><b>3. Strengthening communication and coordination with government actors can create a shared understanding of challenges and help provide a more positive image of the response.</b> It is important to note that this task is not the sole responsibility of the sector. Actors at other levels, including the HoSOG and those in Dhaka, need to use their comparative advantages to leverage change. Nevertheless, the sector could benefit from having local staff in roles of responsibility – which has been seen as effective at bridging divides – and using other sectors comparative advantages either as conduits for communication or to assist in establishing new links.</li><li><b>4. Further engage with the gender dimensions of coordination.</b> Concerns over adopting quotas and pushing gender equality through coordination mechanisms should not prevent further engagement on the issue. A ‘negotiated approach’ should ‘focus on what is important to influential local players, develop constituencies and work to build on positive practice’ (Cooper, 2010). This might involve engaging with customary leaders, particularly men, to gain social legitimacy for norms and principles around gender equality and avoid backlash.</li></ol>

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# Annex 1 Recent coordination reviews in Bangladesh

<b>Author</b>	UNDP, IOM, ICVA and UNHCR
<b>Publishing date</b>	January 2019
<b>Research objective</b>	Review of the coordination structure to make recommendations towards improvements to the approach
<b>Commissioned by</b>	UNDP, IOM, ICVA and UNHCR
<b>Methods</b>	Literature Review and Evaluations Workshop

## Recommendations

- SEG co-chair arrangement (UNHCR, IOM, UN Resident Coordinator) should be refined so as to have a formalised and distinct role for each of the co-chairs to ensure clearer lines of accountability, and division of responsibilities along thematic lines and areas of focus according to agencies' relevant expertise, recognised mandates, capacities and established accountabilities
- Current 10 sectors regrouped into four focused results groups (Protection and Solutions Results Group; Community Representation and Site Management Results Group; Basic Needs Results Group; Resilience Building Results Group) each led by an agency from within HoSOG with a co-lead or co-leads. The Results Groups will report to and be accountable to the HoSOG through the respective lead agencies
- Staffing of the ISCG Secretariat will be streamlined and focused on the type and number of staff needed to provide secretariat support (rather than containing specific sectoral expertise)
- Camp level coordination is expected to gradually move to a more government-led approach under the CiC structure currently being formalised
- International and national actors in the response should work with government and NNGOs and INGOs to agree on a roadmap in which, each year, local actors, led by local government, have greater responsibility in directly managing and delivering the response

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<b>Author</b>	UNICEF (2018)
<b>Publishing date</b>	November 2018
<b>Research objective</b>	Generate lessons to improve the ongoing response
<b>Commissioned by</b>	UNICEF
<b>Methods</b>	Literature review, KIIs, FGDs, two online surveys

#### Recommendations

- Invest in collecting better political, social and economic intelligence for forecasting to inform preparedness actions
- Clarify lines of accountability and relationships, including the roles of sector leads with their home agencies and with the inter-agency coordination structures
- Document the specific ways in which bottlenecks have impacted delivery to inform UNICEF's future strategies and continued advocacy in this area
- Ensure the UNICEF strategy includes an analysis of the context, identifies existing and potential issues and obstacles and explains how the strategy will address these
- Review how strategies for Level 3 emergencies are informed, developed and adjusted throughout a response
- Review the extent to which Communication for Development fits (better) within the humanitarian community's work on engaging with communities in emergency situations and assess the nature of investments needed
- Experiment with innovative ways of building the capacities of its partners, for example, by seconding staff members for financial management, peer support and mentoring rather than training.
- Undertake a light management review that would consider the reallocation of roles and responsibilities between the Dhaka and Cox's Bazar offices and promote staff work across programmes

<b>Author</b>	Refugees International (Sullivan, 2018)
<b>Publishing date</b>	May 2018
<b>Research objective</b>	Assess the humanitarian situation and overall response
<b>Commissioned by</b>	Refugees International
<b>Methods</b>	'Dozens of interviews' with local and international humanitarian actors, UN and government officials, and Rohingya refugees in the camps

#### Recommendations

##### Government:

- Streamline the government's humanitarian response structure, including the appointment of a single senior official in the Prime Minister's Office who can serve as the focal point for the response
- UNHCR, IOM and OCHA should carry out a joint visit to Bangladesh to develop and adopt measures to strengthen management, coordination, coherence and accountability in the international response.

At a minimum, this should include:

1. Stronger and more unified articulation and promotion of key humanitarian issues by the UN's SEG, which is leading the UN's overall humanitarian response.
2. Provision of greater power and authority to the person chosen to oversee the international humanitarian response at the field level in Cox's Bazar.
3. New guidelines and terms of reference that reflect more coherent and accountable management practices.
4. An interim review of how the international humanitarian response structure is being operationalised as part of a forthcoming mid-term review of the JRP guiding the humanitarian response to the Rohingya crisis.

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<b>Author</b>	Sida (2018)
<b>Publishing date</b>	Due for publication
<b>Research objective</b>	Unknown
<b>Commissioned by</b>	UNHCR
<b>Methods</b>	Unknown
<b>Recommendations</b>	Unknown

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# Annex 2 Semi-structured research questions

1. What are the main structures for coordinated planning and response for country-level education in Bangladesh and who are the main stakeholders working within those structures?
  - Ways of working/approach(es) to coordination (MoUs, mandates)?
  - How is national coordination leadership managed?
  - What are your views on the comparative advantages of the main structures and stakeholders?
  - What policies / guidance / tools does the coordination structure / mechanism (and your organisation) use to guide coordinated education planning and response in Bangladesh?
  - How does X structure/ stakeholder support coordinated planning and response across humanitarian–development stakeholders?
  - How do funding mechanisms interlink with these structures?
  
2. Thinking about the main coordination mechanisms and actors that you just spoke about, what do you see as the critical processes or tools for coordinated education planning and response in Bangladesh and why?
  - a. Needs assessment?
  - b. Strategic planning?
  - c. Resource mobilisation?
  - d. Implementation and monitoring?
  - e. Evaluation and review?
  - f. Preparedness?
  - g. Other?
  - h. Do these process and tools extend across humanitarian and development stakeholders?
  
3. What do you see as the main obstacles and constraints of coordinated education planning and response in Bangladesh?

Areas to consider focusing on:

  - coordination with national government
  - inter-agency coordination over the evolution of the crisis and changing leadership roles
  - issues in the early stages and how they impacted the latter stages of coordination (both prior coordination mechanism over the past decades, and since the 2017 influx)
  - long-term implications for the hum-dev nexus as a result of these early issues
  - root causes of these obstacles and constraints
  - issues in relation to repatriation.

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4. Given the obstacles you just highlighted, what needs to be in place to overcome the challenges to coordinated planning and response in Bangladesh?

- In relation to the humanitarian-development nexus
- In relation to local actors
- In relation to unknowable refugee futures
- In relation to ECW and other initiatives
- In relation to the LCFA

5. What do you see as the main strengths of coordinated education planning and response in Bangladesh?

Are there particular mechanisms, initiatives, processes or tools that have helped overcome coordination challenges?

- Do you have concrete examples of good practice?
- In what ways have coordinated education planning and response processes worked well?
- What were the factors that influenced the process?
- How were problems overcome?

6. What do you think is the impact of coordinated education planning and response?

Are you aware of any evidence (even anecdotal) that coordinated education planning and response has led to better education outcomes e.g.: more access, more equitable access; more continuity of education over time; better protection outcomes; better learning outcomes?

- How has coordinated planning and response had this impact?
- What about broader inter-sectoral outcomes like protection, stabilisation, health, wat/san, etc?  
Are you aware of any evidence that coordinated education planning and response has had a measurable impact on reducing people's vulnerabilities and increasing their resilience?

7. Is there anything else important about coordinated planning and response in Bangladesh that we should know?

8. Are there any other key people we should talk to for this case study and/or any documents or tools to share?

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# Annex 3 List of key informant interview agencies

BRAC – Building Resources Across Communities  
CAMPE – Campaign for Popular Education  
CODEC – Community Development Centre  
DAM – Dhaka Ahsania Mission  
DCA – DanChurchAid  
DFID UK Department for International Development  
DPEO – District Primary Education Office  
Education sector  
Global Affairs Canada  
Mukti Cox’s Bazar  
NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council  
OBAT Helpers  
Plan International  
RISDA – Resource Integration and Social Development Association  
Save the Children  
SKUS – Samaj Kalyan Unnayan Shangstha  
Technical working group on shelter  
UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency  
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund  
World Vision



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