



## CASE STUDY

# BANGLADESH

## ABOUT

The Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) in Bangladesh, funded by Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and implemented between 2022 and 2024 addressed the challenge of deeply rooted gender norms and discrimination that create barriers that hinder access to early childhood education, specifically for girls, in the Rohingya refugee camps. To address these challenges, an early childhood development (ECD) initiative was integrated into the 2022–2024 Bangladesh Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP). Launched in 2022, the initiative focuses on tackling harmful gender norms and stereotypes at an early age (3 to 5 years), fostering equitable learning environments. By training facilitators in gender responsive pedagogy, engaging parents and caregivers in Community Support Groups (CSG), and creating inclusive classroom environments, the programme aims to support girls, address gender bias and promote gender equality within households and communities.

## THE PROBLEM

In Cox's Bazar, entrenched gender biases and discriminatory social norms significantly hinder girls' access to education, particularly in the Rohingya refugee camps. Girls are often burdened with care responsibilities and domestic work, reflecting the belief that their education is less valuable than boys'. Many fathers still perceive girls' education to be less important than boys' and see little value in it.

**“Most of the parents of those learners, if the learner is a boy, are willing to send them to the Learning Centre. Sometimes, the mother supports him in reaching the learning centre. But if it is a girl learner and her mother has many care burdens, the first thing in her mind is that ultimately, when her daughter becomes an adolescent, she will not continue her education. So why bother picking up and dropping her off at the Learning Centre every day?”**

*Bangladesh MYRP member interview*

Cultural norms perpetuate the idea that boys should prioritise education. Girls are expected to marry early and take on household duties. This entrenched mindset contributes to high school dropout rates among girls as they reach adolescence. The camp context further exacerbates these challenges: fathers often do not contribute to household chores such as collecting food, leaving mothers overburdened with daily domestic work. As a result, girls' education is deprioritised, as struggling mothers perceive little long-term benefit in keeping their daughters in school. This cycle of gender-based expectations and economic pressures continues to deny girls the opportunity for education and a brighter future.

Additionally, within the camps, there is limited understanding and capacity to challenge these deeply ingrained cultural and gender norms from an early age. Many parents/caregivers and community members do not recognise the value of investing in girls' education, further reinforcing gender disparities.

The limited availability of qualified female teachers exacerbates the problem, as cultural barriers, and child, early and forced marriage restrict women's access to education and teaching roles. This creates a **vicious cycle**, where the absence of female educators means that **girls lack role models**, making it even harder to shift societal attitudes.



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## THE RESPONSE

### The strategy

Even in emergency and protracted crisis contexts, quality early learning services can play a significant role in closing the gender divide and reducing the negative impacts of gender inequality later in life,<sup>1</sup> as well as the systemic gender inequities in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar. Given this, the Bangladesh MYRP integrated a gender responsive approach into the ECD strategy.

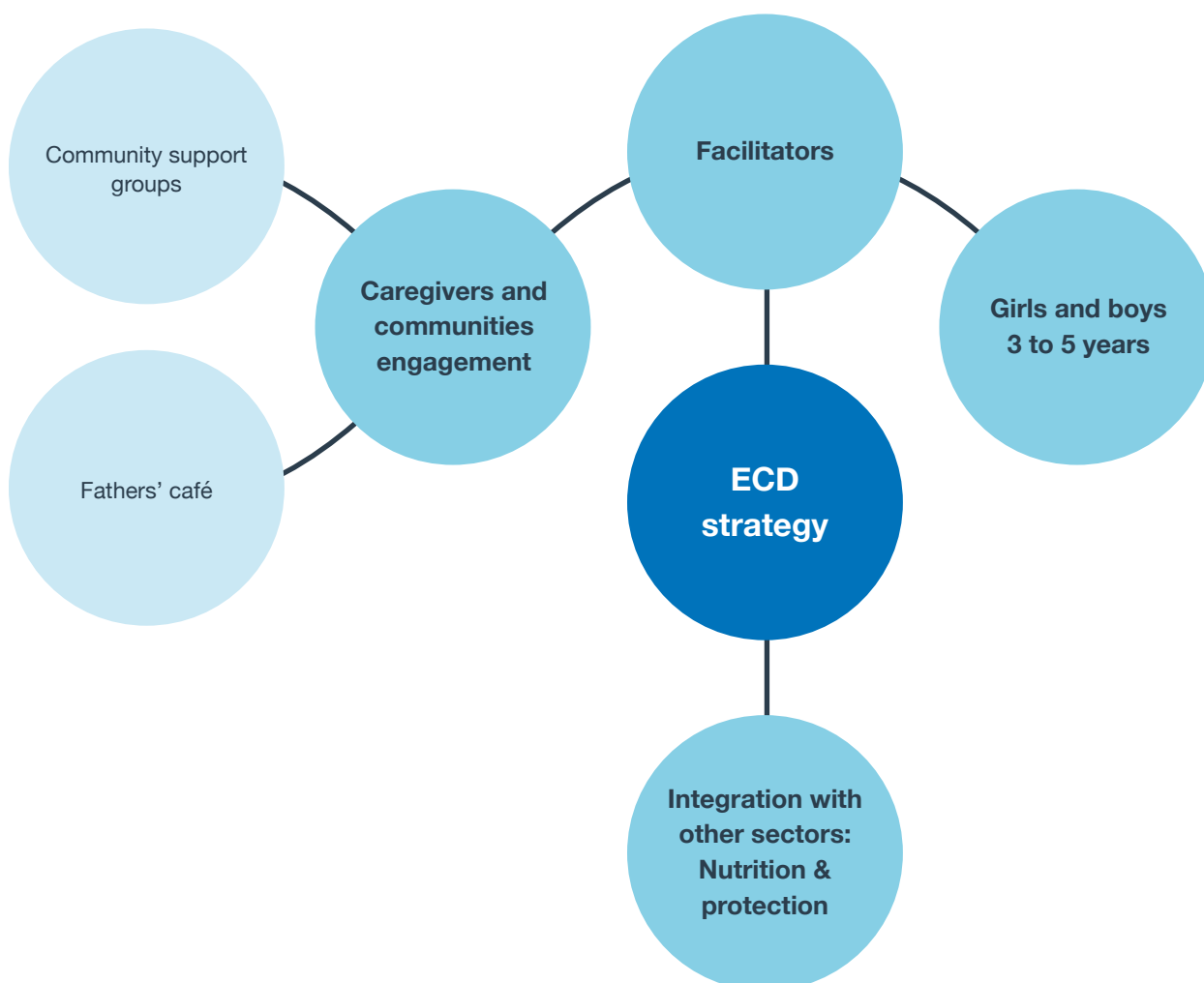
**“ In Rohingya, we have to target the root cause [of gender inequality]. If we do not introduce these things to early-age learners, as adolescents, they will have already adopted all the bad practices of society. But if we could address this at an early age with the children and their parents, it would be easier to change those harmful norms. ”**

*Bangladesh MYRP member interview*

This strategy encompasses early learning for children aged 3 to 5 years, the recruitment and training of facilitators, engagement with caregivers and community members, and the involvement of men and fathers through the Fathers’ Café initiative.

The following sections will elaborate on each component of the strategy.

### Key components of the ECD Strategy



<sup>1</sup> Education Cannot Wait (ECW) (2023). *Delivering on Our Ambition to Advance Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls: An Implementation Guide for Secretariat Staff and FER and MYRP Grantees.*

## Girls and boys

The ECD strategy targets girls and boys aged 3 to 5 from the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. Due to space constraints in the camps, these centres are often set up in shelters provided by facilitators or other community members, following established humanitarian standards for temporary learning spaces to ensure safety, accessibility and a conducive learning environment. The classrooms operate on a two-shift system to accommodate more learners within the limited facilities. The first shift runs from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM, and the second shift occurs from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM.

These programmes aim to challenge harmful gender norms at an early stage, using play-based learning, storytelling and interactive activities, to promote equality. For example, boys are encouraged to engage in caregiving play, while girls participate in activities traditionally seen as being for boys. One interviewee described how they **“...encourage children to see beyond stereotypes through play stations and storytelling [...] In these sessions, boys and girls learn to share household responsibilities. They will be our future change makers, so we also provide them with the knowledge of how to share household work with their brothers and boys, and how to share work in their household with their sisters or their mother”**.

Through these activities, girls and boys learn to question harmful gender norms and practices that they may observe at home or in the community. Boys are taught to share responsibilities equitably, while girls are empowered to see themselves as equal participants in education and society.

**“ We introduce them to these ideas early because as they grow older, harmful gender norms become stronger in the community. At this young age, we mainstream them into understanding there is no barrier based on their gender.**

**“ We use stories where the main character is a girl who challenges norms, like going to school or becoming a leader. These stories inspire children and show them that everyone has equal value, regardless of gender. ”**

*Bangladesh MYRP member interview*

The programme integrates storytelling as a key tool to normalise conversations about gender equality. Additionally, activities encourage children to work together across genders, breaking down societal barriers. **“We teach them to value unity and peer cooperation, regardless of gender differences,”** another interviewee said.

The ECD programmes also prepare girls and boys for school by introducing foundational concepts. **“We provide them with knowledge about discipline, what school is, and how to learn in a group setting,”** explained one interviewee. During this process, according to the interviewee, the girls and boys understand about their own gender and about gender roles. While they are still young, the learners work in peer groups of different genders, because, as the interviewee noted, **“When they become adolescents, they are not allowed to sit with boys. They are not allowed to take classes with boys”**. The aim is to demonstrate that there are no barriers based on gender. **“There are no harmful gender norms if we understand the importance of each gender,”** the interviewee added.

## Integration with other sectors

The initiative is integrated with the nutrition, health and protection sectors to ensure a holistic approach to early childhood development which recognises girls' and boys' learning by supporting their physical, social and emotional wellbeing. To combat malnutrition, nutritious snacks such as fortified biscuits are provided during learning sessions in coordination with the World Food Programme (WFP), reinforcing the importance of proper nutrition in early childhood. Additionally, nutrition education is integrated into the curriculum to help girls, boys and their caregivers to understand the value of a balanced diet for growth, learning and overall health.

Beyond nutrition, the initiative coordinates strongly with the child protection and health sectors to identify and respond to risks affecting girls' and boys' wellbeing. ***“Site protection is a very important sector we are working with, as well as nutrition, health and shelter,”*** explained one programme representative. A monitoring system is in place at learning facilities to ensure timely responses to concerns, allowing the facilitators to identify and refer cases that require specialised support. ***“If we face any health, child protection, or nutrition concerns, we maintain a register at our learning facility level. When we feel that a case should be referred to the child protection sector or a health facility, we do so accordingly. That is why we maintain strong inter-sectoral coordination,”*** they added.

## Facilitators

Facilitators, primarily members of the Rohingya community, are central to implementing gender responsive pedagogy in the ECD centres. They play a crucial role in educating young girls and boys and in creating inclusive environments where learners are treated equally, regardless of gender, and are encouraged to participate actively in all classroom activities, including playtime, question-and-answer sessions, and interactive discussions.

Many facilitators' shelters are used as community-based learning facilities due to space limitations in the camps. According to one interviewee, facilitators' shelters made a vital contribution to overcoming infrastructural challenges.

This dual use underscores the collaboration between education and shelter sector teams, and ensures that facilities are maintained and safeguarded for both purposes. The programme has established clear operational protocols to manage this functionality, ensuring that facilitators and community members uphold child protection standards while maximising available space for learning. One interviewee emphasised, ***“We have safeguarding and PSEA manuals and policies, and we orient the facilitator on safeguarding and PSEA policies. A day-long orientation takes place with the facilitator. They know about the hotline number and the complaint mechanism. We also develop a community feedback mechanism with the participation of the community support group and with the facilitator.”***

Facilitators are also a critical link between the classroom and broader community initiatives. Their role includes ensuring that gender responsive practices are applied consistently during teaching sessions and daily interactions with girls and boys. For example, an interviewee observed that ***“children often come with preconceived notions like ‘pink is for girls’ and ‘guns are for boys’. Facilitators are trained to challenge these ideas through storytelling, play activities, and interactive discussions”***. The facilitators are guided by a framework developed in collaboration with education sector partners, outlining specific models for classroom management assessments. The framework ensures that teaching and learning activities are inclusive and gender responsive, covering everything from equitable engagement during playtime to addressing gender biases within classroom discussions.

Recruiting female facilitators, however, poses significant challenges in the camps. Cultural norms, child, early and forced marriage, and social restrictions on women's mobility limit their access to teaching roles. This systemic issue is compounded by the lack of opportunities for women in Myanmar, which continued in the camps.

***“Unfortunately, we could not find enough capacity among female facilitators in the Rohingya community. Even if we select someone who is capable, they often get married at 16 or 17 years old, which is very common in the camps, and they leave the programme. So, there is a huge problem of child marriage, forced marriage, and forced pregnancy in the camps.”***

*Bangladesh MYRP member interview*

Families also frequently restrict women's movements within the same camp, which further complicates recruitment and retention efforts: ***“If we have a Learning Centre in another block, that particular female facilitator received barriers from her family, from the community, not allowing them to [come].”***

To address these challenges, the programme has initiated a capacity-building effort to prepare young women for roles as educators and leaders. This initiative focuses on equipping participants with skills in the Myanmar curriculum, English and mathematics, enabling them to work as facilitators or with other organisations in the education sector.

Facilitators for ECD undergo comprehensive training programmes tailored to the camp context. Training includes modules on gender responsive pedagogy, storytelling techniques, and inclusive classroom management. However, logistical constraints within the camps, such as restrictions on movement, require decentralised training approaches. Facilitators are often trained in small groups within learning centres.

**“ Usually, we have certain barriers in the camp, like we could not gather all the facilitators in any training centre or anywhere because Rohingya facilitators are not allowed to visit another camp without permission of CSP [camp supervisor]. So, we gather them in a place like a shelter or a learning centre, providing full-fledged training and sometimes TOT. We train them to orient them about the teaching-learning process, classroom management and gender responsive pedagogy training [...]. Apart from that, we orient the facilitator on safeguarding and PSEA policies. Also, they are trained in how they will run their Learning Centre. ”**

*Bangladesh MYRP member interview*

Apart from the training of trainers (TOT), technical specialists provide ongoing one-on-one coaching sessions. These specialists observe classes to ensure facilitators implement gender responsive practices effectively and address any concerns during follow-up visits. **“The specialist visits the Learning Centre [...] to observe how they facilitate the class and how they are able to ensure gender transformative pedagogy with their learning process. Then we will have one-to-one sessions with that person,”** explained one interviewee.

The training sessions also emphasise engaging learners through gender responsive pedagogy such as inclusive playtime activities for girls and boys, equitable participation during Q&A sessions, and fostering mutual respect among peers. Facilitators are trained to recognise and challenge gender biases while ensuring that every learner feels equally valued in the classroom.

The programme continues to prioritise female facilitators' recruitment, training and mentorship to address systemic barriers and foster gender equality in the camps, creating a supportive environment for learners and the broader community.

The facilitators received incentives (rather than salaries) as per Cox's Bazar education sector volunteer payment guidelines. The programme aims to make them economically active and involved in decision-making within their households and communities. This effort seeks to shift harmful norms and mainstream the role of women as facilitators and teachers. By showing how women can earn income, the programme aims for women to be able to **“...participate in the decision-making process in the community, the learning centres, the Community Education Support Group, and the family. So, this is how we are trying to change those harmful norms through these initiatives,”** another interviewee explained.

## Caregivers and communities

Community engagement is central to the initiative, with caregivers and communities involved through Community Support Groups. The trained facilitators from the Learning Centres hold monthly meetings of CSGs that bring together learners and caregivers. These sessions are designed to address gender discrimination and promote inclusion.

The ECD strategy encourages community engagement in gender equality by involving men and boys in discussions, actions and initiatives that challenge destructive gender stereotypes and promote constructive transformations within the targeted communities through gender responsive education in their community-based learning facility (CBLF). Regular parenting sessions address gender-related issues by raising caregivers' awareness about gender equality in daily interactions.

These sessions promote transformation within households. Parents are encouraged to treat boys and girls equally, fostering fairness and reducing biases from an early age. *“We develop our parenting session and parenting awareness modelling accordingly to address all the gender-related errors and gender transformation-related things... Implementing partners are doing their role to address these specific things in their regular meetings and sessions so that they can show their awareness to their little kids [...] and use it in their daily life habits. So, if parents treat girls and boys equally, it would be very good for those learners,”* explained one interviewee.

Men and fathers are explicitly engaged in addressing the unequal care burden within households and encouraging their active involvement in their daughters’ and sons’ education. Through these sessions, fathers learn to share the housework equally with the rest of the household, challenging traditional norms that devalue women’s roles. By integrating discussions on the shared responsibilities of men in household and educational settings, these sessions are pivotal in breaking down entrenched gender stereotypes.

The 12-session curriculum for the Community Education Support Group, conducted by the Learning Centre facilitators, is closely aligned with gender responsive pedagogy and helps facilitators to develop the capacity to promote inclusion. An MYRP member described developing sessions that focus on gender discrimination and gender inclusion in a way that also emphasises disability inclusion. There is also a focus on good parenting practices and child protection concepts, including safe or unsafe touch. *“So, those sessions have been conducted by the facilitators of that Learning Centre, which is also contextualised with the gender transformative pedagogy process.”*

This ensures that classrooms and homes are supportive environments for girls and boys in all their diversity. Implementing partners are crucial in facilitating these sessions and ensuring that the community’s awareness of gender equality and inclusion grows progressively. Through bi-monthly and monthly activities, these efforts continuously reinforce the goal of achieving a balanced gender ratio in education. *“Every month, there is a community support group meeting in those ICT Learning Centres, and those community support group members receive these sessions from the facilitator. We promote that the classroom should be inclusive for all children.”*

Community events, such as storytelling and awareness campaigns, and dialogue sessions are organised to reinforce these messages and foster broader social change. By addressing harmful gender norms at both the household and community levels, the initiative creates an enabling environment where girls are supported to attend and thrive in education.

## Fathers’ café

A key component of the initiative is the “Fathers’ Café”, a dedicated space for engaging men and fathers. This space challenges traditional norms and fosters active participation in household responsibilities and child development. An interviewee explained how the community tended to regard childcare and development as female responsibilities, so awareness-raising on male engagement was needed. To address this, the initiative established the Fathers’ Café, where *“25 fathers get together for the monthly session”*. Trained facilitators guide the sessions, which use a structured curriculum comprising six thematic areas, delivered across 16 sessions over a year.

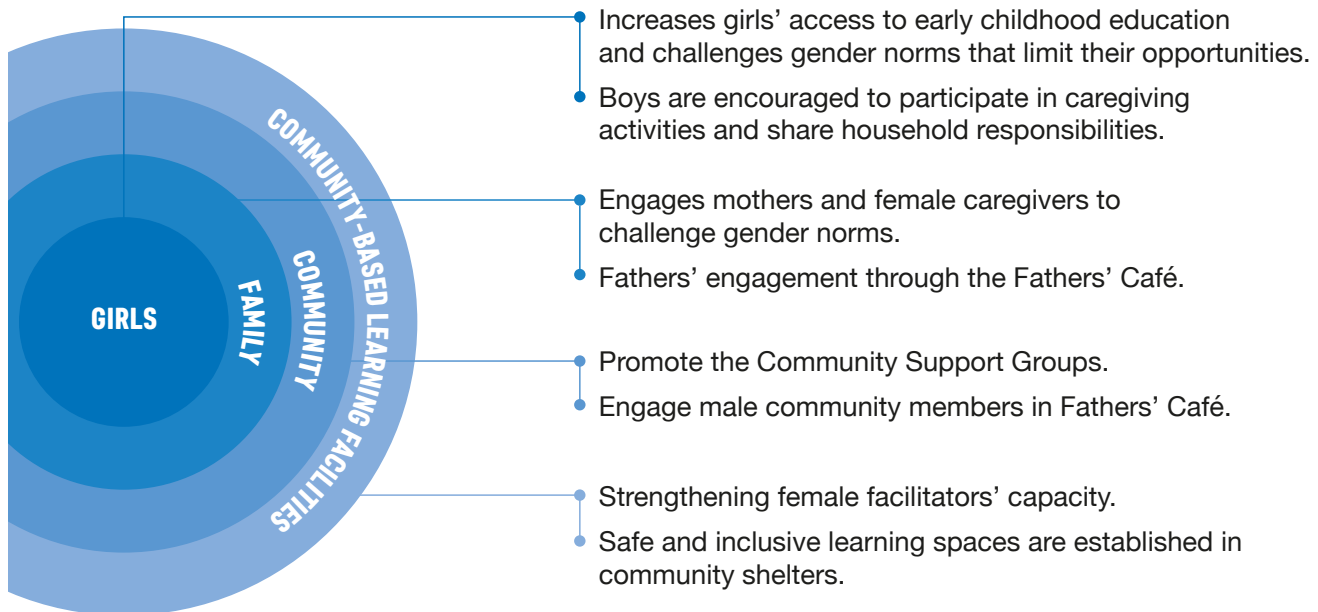
The curriculum focuses on:

- **Childcare and development:** Teaching fathers how to support their children’s physical, emotional and educational needs.
- **Shared household responsibilities:** Encouraging fathers to actively share domestic tasks.
- **Challenging gender norms:** Raising awareness about harmful gender stereotypes and promoting equity in household roles.
- **Leadership and advocacy:** Encouraging fathers to act as role models and advocates for gender equality within their communities.

The Fathers’ Café also serves as a platform for community sensitisation, focusing on redefining the roles of men and women within the household and community. By engaging fathers directly, the programme ensures that the principles of gender equality are practised at home, creating ripple effects across the community.

## THE RESULTS

### IMPACT AT EVERY LEVEL



The implementation of the ECD strategy in the Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazar has led to significant improvements in access to and the quality of early childhood education, the creation of gender equitable learning environments, and shifts in community attitudes towards gender roles. The initiative has increased girls' participation in early learning, strengthened fathers' engagement in caregiving, and empowered female facilitators – despite persistent systemic challenges.

One of the most notable achievements has been expanding access to early learning opportunities for both girls and boys in the camps. The initiative has actively challenged harmful gender norms from an early age, fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment. As a result, more girls are attending school, and boys are engaging in activities that promote gender equity. There has been a gradual increase in the proportion of girls participating in education, surpassing initial expectations, and achieving a gender ratio of 53 girls to 52 boys in some learning facilities.

By June 2024, a total of 4,294 learners (2,267 girls and 2,027 boys) were enrolled at the camp under the Myanmar Curriculum (MC), ECD, and Functional Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) components. To facilitate access, the consortium established more than 140 Community-Based Learning Facilities (CBLFs), including 110 FLN centres and 30 ECD centres within the camps. Additionally, 215 learners (146 girls and 69 boys) graduated from ECD after demonstrating progress across four developmental domains and upon reaching the age of five. During the second semester of 2024, the team coordinated with the Camp-in-Charge (CIC) Office to ensure that these graduates were enrolled in KG (i.e., kindergarten) under the Myanmar Curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

Another positive outcome has been the recruitment and training of female facilitators. Of the 607 facilitators supported by the consortium, 66 per cent were female. The impact of training and mentoring has been notable, with facilitators demonstrating improved gender awareness and inclusive teaching practices. According to the Quarterly Reporting – Joint Narrative Report (June 2024):

It's been found that the facilitators were aware of gender sensitivity and ensured equal participation of the learners regardless of gender, social status, religion, level of understanding, and ethnicity inside the learning facility, treating all the learners equally.

<sup>2</sup> Reference: Quarterly reporting – Joint Narrative report. April 2024 to June 2024.

Another key outcome is the increased participation of fathers in caregiving and household responsibilities through the Fathers' Café, leading to greater gender equity at home. ***“Men are actually supporting their wives for the household course, and they are actually coming to the centre and supporting the learners,”*** explained one interviewee.

In parallel, the programme has focused on strengthening girls' confidence and leadership skills from an early age. Beyond individual empowerment, the initiative has addressed barriers to women's participation in the education sector. The recruitment and training of female facilitators have been a major success, yet challenges remain due to the prevalence of child marriage, which limits girls' and young women's long-term engagement in education and employment.

By addressing barriers such as unequal domestic workloads, harmful social norms, gender-based violence and child abuse, the initiative has improved the daily lives and social position of girls in Rohingya camps. While the programme has achieved notable results, sustaining these efforts remains challenging. One key concern is the ongoing need for funding to maintain the training and engagement of female facilitators and to expand the gender transformative approach. Moreover, deeply entrenched cultural norms continue to pose barriers to long-term gender transformation.

Nuria writes on whiteboard at community-based learning centre



## Box 1. Linkages with INEE Minimum Standard domains

The implementation of the ECD strategy in Cox's Bazar aligns with key **INEE Minimum Standards for Education**, ensuring a holistic and comprehensive approach to education in emergencies. Below is an overview of how these domains and standards are reflected in the initiative.

### Domain 1: Foundational standards for a quality response

The initiative strengthens **Standards 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6** by employing a comprehensive and inclusive approach that integrates gender responsive and gender transformative strategies into early childhood education.

For **Standard 1: Participation**, the programme engaged community members in a needs assessment to understand their specific challenges and priorities. Additionally, the design of the community feedback mechanism was developed “with the participation of the Community Support Group and with the facilitator through a workshop”, ensuring that local voices played a key role in shaping accountability and inclusivity efforts.

For **Standard 2: Resources**, the initiative strategically utilises community-based shelters and facilitators' homes as learning centres, ensuring accessibility and sustainability in a resource-constrained environment. These spaces provide safe and inclusive learning environments, maximising local assets while ensuring that girls and boys have equal opportunities to participate in early education.

For **Standard 3: Coordination**, the programme aligns with the Inter-sector Coordination Group and the government's education sector coordination mechanism. In addition, the initiative works closely with the protection, nutrition and health sectors to provide integrated support for children, further strengthening its gender transformative impact.

For **Standard 5: Response Strategies**, the initiative directly addresses structural barriers and harmful gender norms that limit girls' participation in education. Gender transformative pedagogy is implemented through play-based learning, storytelling and inclusive teaching methodologies, ensuring that children are exposed to equitable gender roles from an early age. Facilitators actively challenge entrenched stereotypes, such as associating specific roles, colours or activities with boys or girls. A key component of the programme is engaging fathers, particularly through the Fathers' Café model, which fosters greater male involvement in caregiving and child education.

For **Standard 6: Monitoring**, continuous assessments ensure that gender transformative pedagogy is effectively implemented and adapted based on feedback from facilitators, caregivers and community members. Facilitators receive ongoing training and one-on-one coaching to refine their teaching approaches, ensuring that gender equality remains central to classroom interactions. Additionally, safeguarding measures are reinforced through regular assessments to identify and mitigate risks associated with child, early and forced marriage, mobility restrictions and gender-based violence, all of which impact girls' access to education.

**Foundation stones:** The project was implemented by organisations with experience of working in Bangladesh, particularly in Cox's Bazar. This was because they were familiar with coordination mechanisms, were recognised by other organisations and the government, and understood the policies, laws and regulations necessary to carry out the work in this context.

## Domain 2: Access and learning environment

The initiative aligns with **Standards 8, 9 and 10**, ensuring equal access, protection and wellbeing for all children.

For **Standard 8: Equal and Equitable Access**, the programme has successfully promoted a 50:50 gender enrolment ratio, ensuring that girls and boys have equal opportunities to engage in early childhood education. By actively challenging gender norms that restrict girls' participation, the initiative fosters an environment where education is recognised as equally valuable for all children.

For **Standard 9: Protection and Wellbeing**, facilitators are trained in child protection, gender-based violence prevention and psychosocial support to create a safe and nurturing learning environment. Children are also equipped with knowledge about safety and protection through curriculum components that cover safe or unsafe touch, and gender-based discrimination awareness.

For **Standard 10: Facilities and Services**, learning centres are linked to health, protection and nutrition services, offering integrated support to girls and boys, and their households.

**Foundation stones:** The shelter sector already had shelters in place. The strategy leveraged these existing spaces to facilitate its implementation.

## Domain 3: Teaching and learning

The initiative strengthens **Standards 11, 12, 13 and 14** by ensuring that gender transformative pedagogy is effectively incorporated into teaching practices, learning materials and facilitator training.

For **Standard 11: Curricula**, the gender transformative curriculum is contextually relevant, addressing local norms and incorporating culturally sensitive materials. A child-appropriate curriculum was developed, integrating storytelling, play-based learning and role-playing to help children question gender roles and recognise that, regardless of gender, they can access education and contribute to household responsibilities. Additionally, the methodology designed for the Fathers' Café responds to the local context by creating a space similar to those where men are accustomed to gathering. Within this familiar setting, conversations about gender inequality are facilitated through discussions that resonate with their lived experiences, fostering critical reflection and engagement.

For **Standard 12: Teaching and Learning Processes**, interactive and play-based learning methods are used to challenge harmful gender norms and foster inclusivity. The integration of age-appropriate activities for early childhood development ensures that children engage in meaningful learning experiences that promote gender equity from an early age. Additionally, comprehensive training for facilitators, combined with one-on-one support and mentoring, equips them with the necessary skills to effectively implement the curriculum. This continuous accompaniment ensures that facilitators can create inclusive learning environments where both boys and girls feel equally valued and encouraged to question and reshape traditional gender roles.

For **Standard 13: Assessment of Holistic Learning Outcomes**, regular assessments evaluate children's understanding of gender equality and their ability to challenge stereotypes. These assessments are integrated into programme monitoring efforts, allowing facilitators to track progress and adjust strategies as needed.

For **Standard 14: Training, Professional Development and Support**, facilitators receive comprehensive training in gender transformative pedagogy and classroom management, ensuring that gender responsive teaching strategies are embedded in daily educational activities. Facilitators also benefit from ongoing coaching and support, strengthening their capacity to create safe and gender inclusive learning environments.

**Foundation stones:** In Bangladesh, the education sector had already been working with gender responsive pedagogy. These materials, curricula and methodologies served as the foundation for introducing gender transformative pedagogy in ECD.

#### Domain 4: Teachers and other education personnel

The initiative aligns with **Standards 15, 16 and 17**, ensuring that facilitators, particularly female facilitators, receive adequate support and resources to implement gender transformative education effectively.

For **Standard 15: Recruitment and Selection**, the initiative prioritises the recruitment and training of female facilitators, addressing barriers such as child, early and forced marriage, and mobility restrictions. These efforts aim to increase women's participation in education roles, challenge societal norms and promote gender equity within the teaching workforce.

For **Standard 16: Conditions of Work**, facilitators receive incentives in line with guidance reviewed by the education sector partners on how volunteers are compensated. Clear guidelines are established to ensure facilitators' active participation and commitment to the programme.

For **Standard 17: Support and Supervision**, technical specialists provide continuous mentorship to facilitators, ensuring that gender transformative practices are consistently implemented. Facilitators receive ongoing coaching, and their classroom performance is regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure quality education delivery.

**Foundation stones:** To determine the payment for facilitators, a pre-existing guideline was in place. This guideline establishes standardised payments for all organisations working in Cox's Bazar.

#### Domain 5: Education policy

The initiative strengthens **Standards 18 and 19**, ensuring alignment with national and international gender and education policies while advocating for systemic changes that support girls' education.

For **Standard 18: Law and Policy Formulation**, the initiative aligns with national education policies, gender equity frameworks, and international commitments on gender transformative education. By working closely with government education authorities, the initiative advocates for systemic policy changes that remove barriers to girls' education and promote long-term gender transformation.

For **Standard 19: Planning and Implementation**, the programme integrates gender transformative goals into broader educational frameworks, ensuring that gender equality is not only addressed as a standalone objective but embedded within all aspects of education planning and delivery. These efforts contribute to long-term systemic change, ensuring that future educational programmes continue to prioritise gender equity and inclusion.

## CONCLUSION

The Bangladesh MYRP provides a strong example of how strategies with the potential to drive gender transformation can be embedded within a programme not originally designed with this focus. In particular, the Early Childhood Development strategy showcases how quality early learning services can be embedded even in EiEPC contexts, addressing gender inequality at its roots. By engaging girls, boys, caregivers and community members – including fathers and male leaders – the programme actively challenged harmful gender norms, increased girls’ participation in education, and fostered more equitable attitudes towards gender roles. The recruitment and training of female facilitators played a key role in shifting perceptions, promoting women’s leadership in education, and serving as role models for young girls. A critical enabler was the early integration of strategies to engage men and fathers, recognising that entrenched norms often place caregiving solely on women’s shoulders. Initiatives like the Fathers’ Café encouraged male involvement in parenting and education, promoting shared household responsibilities.

Community consultations and needs assessments ensured context-specific, impactful interventions, while multi-sectoral partnerships with education and protection actors helped to embed gender considerations into broader policies. A dedicated gender budget, including incentives for facilitators, strengthened sustainability efforts, although continued funding is needed to scale and maintain progress.

Despite these successes, deeply entrenched cultural norms continue to pose barriers to long-term lasting gender transformation, with challenges like child marriage, gender-based violence and restrictions on women’s mobility. As one staff member noted, ***“We are changing the things, changing the context, changing their thinking, their beliefs. We must work for gender transformation; we need more work. It is remarkably changing, and we must continue this type of intervention in this context”.***

This initiative proves that gender transformative approaches can drive systemic change in crisis settings – but sustained commitment and investment remain crucial.