Global goals, local gaps: Assessing refugee education in Bangladesh through the lens of Sustainable Development Goal 4

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Abstract: *This study investigates refugee education paradigms and argues that despite the global education policy shift towards the inclusive approach of merging refugees into national education, the local implementation approaches remain discriminatory, results in refugee exclusion, and affects the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals at national level. The study situates this investigation by analysing the educational provisions for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The study examines the reasons and politics in looking for the answer to the question of why despite the involvement of multiple organisations, available infrastructure, and various educational systems, refugee children still lack access to formal education, and the barriers in achieving quality of education for the refugees. This is a qualitative study based on the primary data collected from 35 key informant interviews. The findings of this study provide insights into both academic research and policy analysis in the field of refugee education, by highlighting a protracted refugee situation in Bangladesh that political exclusion can create the ambiance to nullify the human rights of refugees to education, and even after enormous international attention and financial resources, the educational opportunity of a specific group of the population can be repressed, and that can ultimately impact States' targets to SDGs. It is critical to consider refugee in national development planning not just to address the need of refugees, but also to determine how refugees in protracted situations can contribute to national development.*

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1. Introduction

The key slogan that presents Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a more comprehensive global development approach is the global commitment to "leaving no one behind" which specially refers to empowering the marginalised and vulnerable populations. SDGs are a combination of 17 goals that United Nations (UN) Member States adopted in 2015 and aim to achieve by 2030 (UN Goal 17). SDGs are considered as a shared blueprint to ensure shared development and a better and sustainable future for everyone by protecting rights and well-being to everyone (UN SDGs 2023). These goals are particularly imperative in addressing global issues that hinders development such as poverty, inequality, discrimination, challenges in health, education, climate change, environmental degradation, human rights violation, access to justice, and peace. By agreeing to SDGs State Parties committed to a shared responsibility in adopting a holistic approach to sustainable development that means integration of economic growth, social and environmental protection, and peace (UNESCO 2014; UN 2015).

However, the most crucial agenda of this global commitment is the inclusion process of marginalised community. Refugees, who constitute one of the most vulnerable marginalised populations, are somehow still ignored in the SDG planning of most States. In fact, in the SDGs reference to refugees is made in SDG 10 which advises reducing inequality. Under Goal 10, Target 10.7 focuses on the "orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies." Indicator 10.7.4 notes the "proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin" and Indicators 10.7.2 and 10.7.3 advise recording the number of countries with migration policies that facilitate the orderly, safe, and responsible migration of people and recording the number of people who died or disappeared during the process of migration towards an international destination. In addition to Target 10.7, SDG Target 17.8 provides for data disaggregation based on migratory status (UN Goal 10).

While it is observed that the human rights of refugees are not explicitly mentioned in the SDGs, in each of the SDGs a target for inclusion of everyone is imposed on States which surely applies to address the fundamental human rights of refugees. Access to education and inclusion of refugees in national SDG 4 planning is one of the most critical matters. SDG 4 requires States to "[e]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. Although the foundation of SDG 4 is a combination of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 and the global Education for All (EFA) 2000–15 commitments, SDG 4 is more comprehensive than MDG 2 and EFA. The promise of States of "leaving no one behind" in UN SDGs holds that States will engage in strategic policy formulation and implementation that

may enable eradicating discrimination and inequalities and inclusion of marginalised communities in human development in a wider sense. While the world is currently over halfway to the 2030 target period of SDGs, shockingly poverty, hunger, and more sadly discriminations of various kinds are on the rise (International Rescue Committee 2019b). According to the UN, if no actions are taken in removing discriminatory laws in many countries in the world, it may take 286 years just to close gender gaps in legal protection. In the education sector, due to the impact of decades of underinvestment and discriminatory laws, around 84 million children will remain out of school and 300 million children will drop out before finishing primary school by 2030 (UN 2023; UNHCR 2023a).

Inequalities in the context of refugees is one of the alarming concerns for SDG targets. While the number of displacements has not been controlled, they have been rising for various reasons such as war, conflict, discrimination, suppression, and climate change. Particularly in the post-pandemic world, States in the Global South tend to "normalise" discrimination against the most vulnerable communities, excluding them from global public services like education. Many countries forcefully detain migrants, deny refugee recognitions, and practice discriminatory laws that prohibits refugees to access education, such as in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia etc. From a social justice perspective, it is evident that the plight of refugee children remains a scar on the global development landscape due to socioeconomic inequalities and chronic power imbalance.

Refugee inclusion matters. According to the Human Development Index (2022) and the World Inequality Database (2022), the rate of disempowerment and impoverishment is at a historic high (Human Development Index 2022). This also indicates that global poor societies have not only failed to improve the situation of previous years but also have accelerated the process; there is more impoverishment due to continued discrimination, leaving most of the vulnerable community out of the development agenda, denying rights and disenfranchising certain sections of the population, continuing war, and even causing genocide in recent decades (Denaro and Giuffre 2022, UNHCR 2023b). It is clear that having a discriminatory policy has not resulted in any State saving its resources, making more progress, and increasing their development index position, rather States have to pay for their discriminatory policies in the guise of social, economic, and political unrest. This study investigates refugee education paradigms and argues that despite the global education policy shift towards the inclusive approach of merging refugees into national education, the local implementation approaches remain discriminatory and result in exclusion and impact on SDGs implementation. The study situates this investigation by analysing the educational provisions for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The study examines the reasons and politics in looking for the answer to the question of why, despite the involvement of multiple organisations, available infrastructure, and

various educational systems, refugee children still lack access to formal education, and investigates what the barriers are to achieving the quality of education for the refugees.

The paper is structured as follows. Sections two to five present the literature review on how States exclude refugees from national development planning and the significance of refugee inclusion in achieving SDG targets. For example, section two provides an overview of education as a human right and State responsibilities related to this right; section three addresses the design of education as a humanitarian intervention for the refugees, including pertinent contrast and challenges; section four critically examines Bangladesh's legal obligation to refugee education; and section five goes on to discuss the exclusive features of refugee education in Bangladesh. The methodology and ethical protocol are described in sections six and seven. The conceptual framework is explained in section eight. The study findings and analysis on the implications of State exclusion of refugees from national education towards SDG 4 targets and State development, as well as a paradigm shift towards a development education model, are presented in sections nine and ten. The paper concludes by summarising the challenges in integrating refugees into national education in Bangladesh and offering some potential recommendations.

Research question(s)

- How is refugee inclusion linked with the SDGs agenda of a State?
- What are the key challenges that refugees face in accessing formal education in Bangladesh?
- How does refugee exclusion in national education affect SDGs implementation at the national level in Bangladesh?

2. Education as human rights and State responsibility

Education is neither a choice nor a privilege. Access to education is one of the fundamental human rights. As stated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), "education is needed for the full development of the human personality". International human rights standards have recognised education for all without discrimination including refugees or groups of people who are not recognised by a State as refugees, such as irregular or undocumented migrants. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), in Article 13, urges States to recognise the right of everyone to education. So, education must be accessible to all, especially the most vulnerable groups in laws and facts, without discrimination on any of the prohibited grounds (ECOSOC 1999). Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) imposes an obligation on Member States to provide education progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity. Article 2 of the CRC also needs a careful look, which actually affirms a

prohibition of discrimination and reads "States parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to each child within their jurisdiction". Although the interpretation of this article relies on the State, the UN Children's Rights Committee has explained that Article 2 of the CRC should be interpreted in a broader way while State obligations under the Convention apply within the State's borders, which includes respecting children who attempt to enter the country's territory and then come under the State's jurisdiction (Committee on the Rights of the Child 2005). Therefore, the enjoyment of rights as stated in the CRC is not limited to citizens only but must therefore be extended to all children, including asylum-seeking, refugee, and migrant children, even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the convention (Willems and Vernimmen 2017).

3. Education as a humanitarian intervention for refugees: contrasts and challenges

Since the 1990s, UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have increasingly recognised the role of education in assisting individuals in recovering from mental stress during emergencies. The International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) was founded during the 2000 Education for All (EFA) conference in Dakar to create worldwide minimum requirements for educational access in emergencies (Sinclair 2002; UNICEF and UNESCO 2007). The INEE establishes worldwide minimal criteria that specify the minimum level of educational quality and access in an emergency. These minimal criteria for education in emergencies emphasise the idea that education should be offered as a fundamental right, even during emergencies and for people within a State's jurisdiction, by the broader legal framework for education (INEE 2024).

However, an empirical debate lingers about what education refugees should get. Until 2012, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) Global Education Strategy focused primarily on assisting refugees with access to quality education, resulting in distinct minimum education support. Given the extended nature of global refugee crises, the UNHCR has turned to advocate for the integration of refugees into the national system as the most appropriate approach to address refugees' human right to education (Dryden-Peterson 2016). However, until recently, only 11 countries around the world have incorporated refugees into their national educational legal and policy frameworks (UNHCR 2021b). This is because UNHCR, together with its funders and NGO partners, focuses on developing "special curricula" for refugees, and the host Government takes advantage of this opportunity by implementing discriminatory education policies for refugees. Refugees require particular arrangements to prepare them for mainstream education, such as local language training and socio-cultural orientation within the local education

system. However, this "special curricula" is in practice a separate education arrangement for the refugees paving them towards exclusion from formal education, such as separate curricula for refugees, separate classrooms, and separate class hours for refugees, or even separate schools for refugees, where their education remains informal and unofficial and they never have the opportunity to interact with national children or develop social integration skills. This kind of separate arrangement ultimately made the refugees "unfit" for mainstream education in a host country (Shuayb 2019).

The humanitarian approach plots refugee exclusion and eventual educational deficiency. For example, "refugee experience" is the most commonly used term while planning emergency education. Scholars contend that this concept is referred to legitimise separate or specialised educational programmes (Tallis 2019). Some academics oppose the concept of a single "refugee experience." They propose calling it "the experience and voice of refugees" to avoid mixing their experiences with their current needs (Brun and Shuayb 2020). Some regard the politicised approach to refugee education espoused by "Education in Emergency" under humanitarianism as regressive and devoid of pedagogical merit, as it promotes the official plan of separate schooling for refugees. Maha Shuayb and her research team examined documents from the previous five years about the challenges and successes in the education sector in both national and refugee education programmes in Lebanon and discovered that the challenges faced by refugees and marginalised nationals were strikingly similar (Shuayb 2019). An important question arises: can the same educational approach utilised for poor and marginalised citizens be applied to refugee education, and can humanitarian aid received by refugees benefit local disadvantaged populations?

Some studies have focused on developing theories for refugee education, suggesting that host countries typically adopt a "problem-solving approach to education" during crises, aiming to maintain the status quo. This approach primarily focuses on the "who and what" aspects, meaning who the refugees are and what minimal support can resolve the issue (Novelli 2008). However, this status quo approach tends to overlook broader social implications or impacts. These studies highlight that refugee education programmes are typically rooted in a humanitarian response paradigm (Brun 2016). Specialised education for refugees is proposed to portray them as unique in the humanitarian context (McBrien 2005). Rutter's study raises the important point that generalising all refugee children as "traumatized" and providing an education programme primarily focused on psychosocial support may not be appropriate for children who have not experienced the same traumas during their travels but face different post-migration challenges such as poverty, racism, and isolation (Rutter 2006).

In humanitarian education intervention, refugees are frequently labelled as "the others" and the education programme is described as a "refugee brand," "refugee-friendly," and "refugee-centred." However, this segregated approach often results in more negative outcomes than positive ones, such as refugees being unfit for mainstream education, unfit for the local job market, or regarded as unfit for local integration (Brun and Shuayb 2020). In many Global South countries that typically host refugees, discrimination takes various forms, with policy exclusion being the most common. In countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, refugees are barred from accessing public education, leading to an approach of exclusion and segregation from the host population. In these regions, refugees often attend community-based informal schools or learning centres in refugee camps. Despite the involvement of prominent humanitarian organisations and donors, research shows that the quality of refugee education remains inadequate, failing to bring about substantial changes in refugees' lives or their contributions to the host society (Hetzer and Hopkins 2019).

4. Refugee education and legal obligation of Bangladesh

The Rohingyas are one of the ethnic minorities in Rakhine State, Myanmar, who are both internally and externally displaced due to political and communal conflicts. They are also stateless, as they have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since the introduction of the 1982 Citizenship Law. Under international law a stateless person is defined as "someone who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law" (UN Convention on Statelessness 1954). Rohingyas therefore are regarded as stateless and prima-facie refugee in any country (UNHCR 1997). Rohingyas have been seeking asylum in Bangladesh for around five decades, and during this time the Bangladeshi authorities have been denying the right to education to Rohingyas refugees.

The provision of education mentioned in the Constitution of Bangladesh is technically vague but politically strategised. The Constitution has incorporated a provision on state education policy under Article 17 stipulating that "the state shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of (a) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such a stage as may be determined by law; (b) relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; and (c) removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law." Hence, based on the gist of Article 17 of the Constitution, educational access is granted to the citizens and legal residents (determined by laws). The Bangladesh Government does not recognise the Rohingyas as refugees and labelled them as "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals," regards them as "illegal" and ineligible for national education, and thus justifies structural discrimination against

the refugees and the provision of minimum education in refugee camps (Mamun et al. 2023).

However, Bangladesh's commitment towards international human rights treaties cannot be ignored. Bangladesh is not party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or the statelessness-related Conventions of 1954 and 1961, but the country is party to the CRC, ICESCR, and the Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNHCR 2018). In ratifying the ICESCR, Bangladesh declared it would implement the right to education without discrimination "in a progressive manner, in keeping pace with existing economic conditions.". But Bangladesh's refugee education policy is in complete contradiction with this declaration of the non-discrimination principle. Bangladesh's continued denial of refugee educational rights is not only discriminatory, but also contradictory to the country's commitment to progressive realisation. Such a denial is unlawful and misguided (Willems and Vernimmen 2017).

5. Exclusive refugee education in Bangladesh

55%, or about 540,000, of the present refugee population in Cox's Bazar are children, including unaccompanied, separated, and child-headed households (CODEC et al. 2017; UNHCR 2024). Several humanitarian organisations have evaluated the fact that good education intervention might be "one solution addressing numerous problems" (UNICEF 2019). According to the UNHCR, the existing limited informal education system in 34 refugee camps serves 203,316 children, leaving 47% of children aged 3–14 without access to primary school and 97% of adolescents and youth aged 15–24 without any learning opportunities (UNHCR 2021a; UNHCR 2021b).

Before 2005, Rohingya refugees did not even access informal education. Bangladesh's Government authorised non-formal education in refugee camp schools for the first time in 2006 (Prodip 2017). In 2007, community-based schools began teaching only Burmese, English, and Math. In 2008, the Bangladesh Government permitted the use of the country's national curriculum for non-formal education in refugee camps but did not officially acknowledge it. However, the overall approach to refugee education has changed dramatically since the 2016–17 surge. In 2018, the Government adopted a strategy of different curricula and educational arrangements for refugees, known as "refugee-specific education." As part of this new policy, the Bangladesh Government revoked the national curricula that were in use in the two registered camps in 2019, restricting teaching, learning, and the usage of Bengali in all educational activities within refugee camps. In 2018, humanitarian organisations formed the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) for Refugees. UNICEF, SCI, and BRAC serve as co-leads in the ISCG Education Sector, where they collaborate with the Government to construct the "education in emergency" programme

for refugees in Bangladesh. These agencies began developing temporary learning centres in all camps. The most fundamental problem of the ISCG Education Sector is that it never engages with the Ministry of Education Bangladesh, instead focusing on developing "refugee-specific" curricula. Currently, the ISCG education sector has produced and amended several such curricula but has struggled to execute them (Rahman 2020). The Learning Competency Framework Approach (LCFA), a non-Bengali refugee curriculum, was designed by ISCG in 2019. This curriculum has since been changed multiple times and is now used in refugee camps. In 2020, the Bangladeshi Government announced plans to install Myanmar curricula in Bangladesh refugee camps (Rahman et al. 2022). All of these measures indicate that refugees in Bangladesh have little to no possibility of integrating into regular education.

6. Research methods

This study employs an interpretive phenomenological constructivist qualitative analysis technique. Constructivism, which was first articulated by Jean Piaget in 1971 as part of his cognitive development theory, looks into the relationship between people's lived experiences (research participants) and the underlying meanings contained within them. Constructivism has several different branches, including cognitive, radical, phenomenological, and biological constructivism (Soffer 1993). In 1931, Edmund Husserl introduced phenomenology, intending to understand context via people's lived experiences. This study used a phenomenological constructivist method, looking into how people's experiences influence their worldviews, with a focus on the exclusion of refugees from education (Moran 2013).

6.1. Data collection and analysis techniques

Participants' recruitment process and limitations

This study collected information and insights using two methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis is the process of obtaining useful information from written or recorded sources, such as reports, articles, or historical documents. The researcher extracted significant concepts and theories from the relevant literature. Semi-structured interviews entail conducting guided conversations with participants to capture qualitative data while allowing for flexibility in questioning to elicit more profound thoughts. This investigation looked at scholarly papers, UN, I/NGO, and newspaper stories, Government data and statistics, and major donor reports.

The study collected primary data through 35 key informant interviews such as refugees (11), civil society (including academia, human rights organisations, journalist) (5), host community (local village leaders) (5), Government officials (5), and humanitarian organisation (9). A

combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to select research subjects. The purpose of choosing such tools is to get as many "relevant opinions" as possible from a variety of stakeholders, which allows for qualitative analysis. This is a technique where respondents are chosen in a non-random manner based on their expertise in the phenomenon being studied (Shi 2011; Singh 2007). A standard semi-structured questionnaire was used for all key informant interviews, which focused on seeking the answer to the same question from each set of participants.

6.2. Data analysis

The goal of this research was to investigate the formation of a humanitarian paradigm for refugee education in Bangladesh, as well as its relationship to State policies that exclude refugees from formal education, thereby violating refugees' human rights to education. To address the research questions, a two-pronged approach was adopted: first, an experiential analysis (constructivism) was used to understand the many perspectives on refugee education; second, a situational analysis (phenomenology) was used to discover why this problem persisted. Using qualitative approaches, the study examines existing refugee education paradigms and contextualises this phenomenon within Bangladesh's refugee education setting by delving into key informants' perspectives and experiences.

7. Ethical considerations

The data were collected between 2021 and 2022 after Mahidol University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the ethical research protocol (IPSR-IRB-2021-170). During the informed consent process, which took place before the interviews and was documented in written consent forms, key informants were thoroughly briefed on the research's aim, goals, and potential ramifications. During interviews, the identities of participants were protected with pseudonyms. Questions were asked in Bengali, Rohingya, or English as needed, with no interpretation required because the principal researcher spoke all three languages fluently.

8. Conceptual framework

In the case of refugees, authorities frequently confuse "inclusion" with "integration" and consciously avoid using the word. This study, however, distinguishes between two viewpoints that have emerged in the literature as "structural integration" and "rational integration" (Strang and Ager 2010). The term "integration" is ambiguous in the refugee situation because it is closely linked to refugee status and rights, resulting in a complicated equation that involves access to services (OECD 2012). Integration entails not only providing refugees with access to resources, both minorities and non-citizens, but also resettlement and solution-seeking. In host countries, inclusion is generally considered as a path

to long-term status or citizenship, which has political implications. The term "inclusion" is sometimes used interchangeably with "reception," in which refugees are judged on humanitarian grounds to receive limited aid, including education (Sinclair 2002). However, this approach ignores the value of education in people's lives, as well as formal education as a vehicle for defining one's life story (Pinson and Arnot 2007).

In this study, the term "inclusion" refers to providing refugees with access to formal education as part of the solution. Inclusion in refugee education entails structural and rational integration. Structural integration policies give refugees access to resources such as schools, whereas rational integration policies prioritise socio-cultural integration, which involves identity development, a sense of belonging, and social involvement (Fraser 2007). Despite the removal of legal barriers, refugee children's school enrolment remains low in numerous countries, such as Thailand and Iran, due to a lack of awareness among both refugees and locals (Peterson et al. 2019). Socio-cultural integration is a linking process. Refugees should be entitled to attend classes with native children. This structural plan should include both initial and long-term interventions. In some countries, there are no legal impediments to refugees attending local schools; however, separate schools or shifts are established for refugee children to keep them apart from the local population. In Lebanon, for example, refugee children attend school in different shifts, denying them the opportunity to make connections, which is the primary impact of education on individual lives and serves as a means for local children to learn acceptance and contribute to the development of social cohesion (Taylor and Sidhu 2011). Furthermore, if refugees are restricted to small or rural regions, constructing new school infrastructure and instituting segregated schooling may further marginalise them, making it critical to integrate refugee children into local schools.

9. Research results

SDG 4 states: "Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." This goal is a combination of three themes: 1) inclusion (removal of structural barriers); 2) equality (fair and impartial); and 3) lifelong learning opportunities/ continuity (opportunities of learning new skills and knowledge throughout life). Based on the field data this section discusses how far these themes are implemented in the refugee context of Bangladesh.

9.1. "Inclusion" is denied

In Bangladesh refugees are not allowed to enrol in public school, therefore the theme of "inclusion" is restricted. First and foremost, in Bangladesh, refugees are politically "ineligible" for many public services, including education. The Rohingya are being refused refugee status on purpose.

The Bangladeshi Constitution states that education is only provided to citizens and legal residents. The Rohingyas are systematically barred from acquiring a public education. Rohingya refugees are not issued birth certificates, which are essential for enrolment in local schools. As a result, the Bangladeshi Government has limited the access of refugees to public education rather than completely ceasing to provide it. Haddad properly described the scenario in which "refugees are generally within and outside of the nation-state" demonstrating the conflict between global international rules and local implementation tactics (Haddad 2008, 7). To demonstrate their humanitarian image and adherence to international treaties, States welcome refugees but then hand them over to humanitarian organisations, saying that the State is financially unable to support an additional population. However, the State's realist approach isolates refugees from the national process, limiting the capacity of humanitarian organisations to take a holistic approach that would allow refugees to use public services in the same way that citizens do. This practical humanitarian approach poses obstacles in resolving several human rights issues for refugees, including education. In Bangladesh, the State portrays refugees as disaster victims and hence asks humanitarian organisations to provide "refugee-appropriate" education. Because camp-based refugee education does not collaborate with national-level processes or institutional enforcement, it continues to fall short of national education standards and is legally unrecognised.

9.2. "Equality' is restricted

Bangladesh's current refugee education can be regarded as a "humanitarian response paradigm." This paradigm is simple and consists of two key elements: first, it addresses the vulnerability of the affected population in need of humanitarian assistance; second, it operates with a sense of temporariness, assuming that the support is temporary because certain individuals are staying temporarily. One of the most essential aspects of this paradigm is that it offers education to crisis-affected people not only in the short term but also without a clear purpose. This indicates a disparity between education offerings and their desired impact (Brun and Shuayb 2020).

In Bangladesh, refugee education is separated, with separate arrangements for refugees and the host population. This split is established by transferring refugee management to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, which is independent from the Ministry of Education. The Bangladeshi Government justifies this policy by citing reasons such as refugees' temporary status as a population awaiting repatriation, concerns about educating refugees in national curricula, which could lead to self-integration or citizenship demands, and resource constraints in accommodating a significant additional population in the local educational system. This method exhibits the

humanitarian response paradigm, in which education is restricted to the humanitarian situation.

During the consultation for this study, a I/NGO staff state that:

"We run education in the refugee camp only to keep the children busy so that they are not involved in wrong activities and get spoiled" (HO-05, 26/11/2021).

Knowing this, a refugee parent stated that:

"They want to keep our children busy in the school but then designed a tedious education curriculum. Neither the children nor the parents found it useful for their children. This education has produced no impact on our children" (RO-02, 30/9/2021) and another stated:

"My son does not want to go to school and I can see why as he does not learn new things from the school. This education is not for us to develop, it's for the agencies to show their work" (RO-10, 15/12//2021).

9.3. "Lifelong learning opportunities" is ignored

In the alternative "humanitarian education" model the theme of lifelong learning opportunities is in complete ignorance, because:

a. Education is seen as a problem-solving intervention

Humanitarian reasons prioritise biological needs, which refer to the physical necessities of an impoverished individual's life, fragility, and unhappiness, and provide aid based on that, therefore preserving their lives. However, the biographical need for education in an individual's life, that is, the impact of education and knowledge that can enable individuals to do something independently or express their existence, is completely ignored in this type of education design, so scholars tend to call it "emergency problem-solving approach" (Crul et al. 2019).

During the primary data collecting process, refugee key informants stated that segregated refugee education not only fails to provide quality education but also struggles to instil excitement and drive in the refugee population. A few Rohingya refugee parents expressed their feelings on the quality of education in this research saying:

"Our children neither learn anything new in school, nor they can get any certificate that they would be able to use in future. Refugee children are getting frustrated when they see the Bangladeshi children in the next village go to the local school, but children are not allowed as they are refugees" (RO-4, 5/10/21).

Another refugee community leader said:

"Since refugee education is unofficial and is not regarded as an educational qualification, this does qualify us for the local job market, hence this is useless for us" (RO-5, 12/11/2021).

Refugee respondents conclude that the current education programme may not be able to improve their circumstances. Almost all refugee informants cite uncertainty and a lack of prospects as the key reasons for their disinterest in camp-based education. As a result, it is now common to hear stories about early marriage, refugees attempting to flee the camp, child or forced labour, trafficking, or attempting to move to other countries illegally. As one of the refugee key informants said:

"We wait for our girls to reach puberty soon to get them to marry as there is no education in the camp. I prefer my daughters to keep home and teach them some household work instead" (RO-7, 9/11/2021).

b. Education is designed as "psycho-social support"

Refugees are frequently characterised as "traumatized," hence refugee education is constructed in an "emergency" mode, with a large portion of the curriculum focusing on psychosocial interventions. Scholars, on the other side, have raised numerous concerns about this approach, including: 1) if refugees are included in global education for all missions to establish a sense of normalcy for refugees through complete education, how will this goal be reached with limited education? (Save the Children 2017); 2) children born in camps require systematic education to prevent trauma caused by a lack of cognitive development opportunities and a progressive loss of hope (Matthews 2008; Rutter 2006); and 3) can refugees be held in temporary, limited schooling indefinitely? (Crul et al. 2019). Here is a summary of the findings of some these questions extracted from this study.

Under the education in emergency paradigm, humanitarian organisations provide education as "psycho-social support" to the refugees to overcome the trauma associated with refugee life. Fassin emphasises critical long-term factors such as whether refugees will be refugees indefinitely, if they will live in confined camps, and whether host nations can sustain refugees on aid indefinitely (Fassin 2012). Bangladesh's refugee education programme is still limited to psychological interventions for refugee children due to a lack of a standardised curriculum. When asked how much the existing education helps address mental health issues, one refugee parent responded:

"I cannot answer my 10-year-old son why he cannot go to the same school as his Bangladeshi playmate in the next village. Separate education indicates that we are different and creates even more stress" (RO-02, 30/9/2021).

10. Critical analysis: Does refugee inclusion matter in Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets?

Refugees are sheltered in Cox's Bazar, one of Bangladesh's poorest regions, where education sector requires additional assistance to increase access and quality. Furthermore, the 2016–17 refugee intake has had an impact on local education, as local schoolteachers and students have decided to work in camp-based NGOs, resulting in a teacher shortage and school dropout among local high schoolers. This has negatively impacted local education (UNDP 2018). While investigating the efficacy and politics of Bangladesh's humanitarian refugee education model, this study seeks to identify a new paradigm of inclusive education through the following analysis.

10.1. Efficacy of humanitarian education paradigm

To ensure the success of any community-based effort, robust community involvement and a sense of "ownership" must be established. Refugees, on the other hand, have problems in Bangladesh due to the country's unique refugee policy. The continuous lack of structural educational opportunities has generated persistent pessimism. This pessimism can sometimes inhibit the fulfilment of fundamental human needs, also known as psychosocial assistance, for which the host State often enables refugee groups to attend school. The core issue is that if a given type of educational service does not adequately contribute to the cognitive development of students, it is unlikely to provide substantial psychological support (Centre for Peace and Justice and Brac University 2021). Although education is frequently cited as a critical source of psychosocial assistance for immigrant children. As one refugee parent commented:

> "Our children do not want to go to school and we cannot see any change in their behaviour. Older children either want to go to work to earn money or remain idle at home" (RO-8, 13/11/2021).

In Bangladesh, the humanitarian response paradigm for refugee education lacks standardised curricula that might lead to meaningful educational outcomes or teach refugees about long-term solutions.

10.2. Exploring the development model

This development paradigm of refugee education, also known as humanitarian-development coherence in education, is a relatively new notion. Given the extraordinary extent of human displacement, all parties are increasingly aware that responding to humanitarian crises involving forced displacement cannot be fully dependent on foreign assistance. As a result, the most effective solutions must be developed locally and improved with additional resources.

It is critical to note that, while segregation is a significant impediment to providing quality education and upholding the right of refugees to an education, inclusion should be viewed as the most viable approach to ensuring refugee education while reducing the burdens on both humanitarian aid and host society. This development paradigm is based on two interrelated concepts: 1) inclusion in education and 2) inclusion in development. The primary goal of this part is to look at what inclusion means in the context of refugee education and how it may be integrated into a larger development strategy. The growing number of refugees in protracted crises is prompting Governments and humanitarian organisations to seek more practical approaches to refugee education, with a development-oriented perspective. This poses a challenge for developing countries in the Global South, where they host a significant share of the world's refugees. The dilemma arises from the need to accommodate new refugee children in schools while many of the national children lack access to education.

For education in particular, it is invaluable to understand the nexus between humanitarian and development coherence. The organisations and donors who target education support in crises like Education Cannot Wait, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Global Education Cluster, and European Commission Humanitarian Aid often fail due to structural barriers and shrinking funds in short-term projects like in Bangladesh (Novelli 2016). There are multi-mandate organisations that seek long-term sustainable solutions for refugees that extend beyond humanitarian assistance, like UNHCR, UNICEF, and Save the Children, who need to work both in humanitarian and development spaces. Some development-focused organisations and donors provide funds for development like the Global Partnership for Education, USAID, and the World Bank, but many of these projects are hindered due to the emerging crises occurring in the countries where they invested development funds. Finally, the Government and the Ministry of Education need to play the most critical role by harnessing the human development dynamics of education to benefit both the resilience and improvement of the education system.

The entire concept of coherence here underpins the comprehensive humanitarian development efforts to ensure education for all children, both the distressed and local communities, to recover from the impact of the crisis. UNICEF has been leading education in emergencies globally (including refugee education in Bangladesh) and stated in its 2019 education report that to ensure the continuation of both humanitarian and development activities at the same time, policies and programmes must consider the impact of the crisis on the whole population (UNICEF 2019). Humanitarian organisations should advocate for policy inclusion and continue their education programme to prepare refugees for national education. The development organisation should invest in building additional schools and capacity-building of local schools to ensure

accessibility and quality of local schools targeting all populations in the locale.

10.3. Sustainable Development Goal 4, challenges and prospects in Bangladesh

As per the SDG index rank, Bangladesh ranked 104 out of 163, with a score of 64.22. According to UNICEF, 90% of 6–10 years old children are in school. This data surely does not include the refugee children of the same age group. Even UNICEF, the lead implementing partner, does not advocate on refugee inclusion, rather focusing on implementing the "Myanmar National Curricula" inside refugee camps in Bangladesh without any official agreement between Myanmar-Bangladesh (UNICEF 2023). Therefore, it is not clear which Government will be responsible for recognising such education. Refugees do not exist in Bangladesh national education planning where discrimination means a gender disparity and out of school children only refers to the poor and underprivileged community. Hence over a half a million refugee children living in Bangladesh strictly remain out of the national SDG planning.

Although the Bangladeshi Government insists that repatriation is the "only" solution and thus opposes any long-term intervention for refugees, most recent research and reports have found that "the government of Bangladesh must prepare for the fact that this refugee crisis is on track to become protracted" (Post et al. 2019). Such circumstances could have a huge impact not only on the refugees but also on the local community. Refugees rely almost entirely on aid services because they are not legally permitted to work. Furthermore, due to their illiteracy and lack of skills, the bulk of refugees are only qualified for physical labour and related job opportunities. Inadequate aid, along with a lack of educational and income opportunities, has forced refugees to engage in negative coping strategies including child labour, child marriage, drug use, and human trafficking (The Business Standard 2021; Palma 2021).

According to the UNDP, the service demands of refugees and local host populations in Cox's Bazar are practically comparable. While Cox's Bazar is one of Bangladesh's poorest districts, the two sub-districts Teknaf and Ukhiya, where refugees live, are also among the poorest in the district (UNDP 2018). The Cox's Bazar district has 33% of its population living in poverty, which is more than the national average of 25%. 40% of the Cox's Bazar population has the poorest food intake, and 41% borrow food from relatives or communities daily, which is nearly identical to the share of refugees who rely on food handouts inside the camp (IRC 2019a). Furthermore, according to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Bangladesh 2018 report, the district's school admission rate in 2017 was 73% males and 69 girls, compared to 98% nationally; yet the district had the highest school dropout rate at 31.2%, compared to

the national average of 19.2% (MoPME 2018). The World Bank's 2019 report shows that Cox's Bazar district has the lowest school attendance rate and educational performance in the country. It ranks second to lowest in reading and maths achievement, indicating a low quality of learning and teaching practice. This survey also found that public education receives the least amount of district development financing. As a result, it is obvious that the local population requires extra services to increase the district's educational level (World Bank Group 2019).

Along with the already poor quality, current refugee management has had an impact on the local educational system. Several thousand learning centres were established within camps for various refugee schooling arrangements, with the majority of teaching staff drawn from the local population, including local school teachers with prior teaching experience and local high school graduates. This has exacerbated the already severe difficulties facing the local education system, such as a rise in school dropout rates when students are hired by NGOs in refugee camps before finishing high school (Hetzer and Hopkins 2019). In response to the declining funding trend, several humanitarian and development organisations have recently begun advocating for a comprehensive development plan, with a focus on increasing self-sufficiency opportunities and allowing refugees to work legally (Clemens et al. 2018). However, the administration has consistently opposed such an approach. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank have lately failed to persuade the Bangladeshi Government to change its refugee policies in favour of a multi-year self-reliance approach that includes both refugees and hosts (Palma 2021). Interestingly, the IRC Livelihood Assessment Report 2019 showed that the key cause for the failure of most short-term self-reliance initiatives was the recipients' low literacy and skill levels (IRC 2019a).

11. Conclusion

Bangladesh's restriction on refugee education is in clear contraction of SDG 4 themes of inclusion, equality, quality, and continuity. When assessing the current state of education in Cox's Bazar, it is evident that the district's school system requires extra support. To accommodate refugees in local schools, the number of schools must be increased and education staff trained. These arrangements would be possible if the Government, development investors, and humanitarian organisations work together. If the Government allows refugees to attend national schools, development donors can help improve infrastructure, while humanitarian donors can give teacher and education staff training and prepare refugees for mainstream education. State Governments stand to benefit from such humanitarian-development coordination.

This study investigates the efficacy of humanitarian model of refugee education interventions, and it concludes that the current refugee

education system falls far short of quality humanitarian interventions while positively impacting the lives of refugees. As a result, temporary education decreased humanitarian costs while increasing the number of aid-seeking refugees. When refugees are regulated using humanitarianism approaches, the State prioritises its interests and imposes restrictions and legislation that restrict refugee services. In Bangladesh, for example, refugees are declared "illegal" when they are refused refugee status, restricted to access documents, and are ineligible for public education, hence the Government justifies limited camp-based humanitarian education for refugees. Furthermore, limitations on humanitarian education, such as the lack of a uniform curriculum, formal recognition, and education as a form of psychosocial help, have resulted in ineffective programmes. Education has a direct impact on both personal and societal growth. Excluding refugees from national education for an extended period may hinder overall national development.

The camp-based alternate education contradicts with the SDG "inclusion" theme. Refugees are unable to integrate into mainstream education and hence cannot contribute to national development. Refugees must be incorporated into Bangladesh's national development policy. This strategy will require collaboration between humanitarian and devolvement initiatives to address education requirements holistically for both refugees and locals. This technique will not only help with more systematic refugee management but will also enhance public perception of refugees, who are frequently perceived as burdens. However, more research is needed to discover the fundamental criteria for the collaborative development technique, as well as the key barriers to integrating refugees into national education in Bangladesh. By gathering such information, we may be able to determine what legislative measures are needed to integrate refugees into national education, as well as identify what further help refugees may require.

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