



MUKTI
COX'S BAZAR

ACCELERATING ATTAINMENT

UNDERSTANDING LEARNING LEVELS AND
BARRIERS TO EDUCATION AMONGST HOST
COMMUNITIES IN COX'S BAZAR BANGLADESH

JUNE 2019
SUMMARY REPORT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research report seeks to address the lack of accumulated knowledge on learning levels amongst children and adolescents – especially who are those out-of-school – in communities in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh that are host to the displaced Rohingya refugees. This small-scale study seeks to provide an indicative insight into the present learning levels of children and adolescents, how these learning levels vary by education status, gender, age and living status, as well as some of the main barriers to education faced by children and adolescents in host communities.

The findings are drawn from the results of 277 literacy and numeracy assessments in Bengali, English and Mathematics with predominantly out-of-school children and adolescents in host communities in Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas, and X focus group discussions with children and adolescents in host communities in Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas.

The following report finds:

- A lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills amongst children and adolescents in host communities
- As may be expected being presently in-school, more years of schooling, age and living with parents were found to have a significant and positive impact on learning levels
- There is little discernible difference between male and female learning levels amongst children and adolescents in host communities
- Barriers to education relating to accessibility and quality of learning have intensified since the onset of the Rohingya crisis
- Protection risks interrelate and present further barriers to education including early marriage, child labour, and sexual harassment

This report recommends interventions that support sustained education (reduced dropouts, increased enrolment, and (re)integration into formal education) increased support for both in-school and out-of-school children to achieve foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, interventions should consider the ways in which protection risks interrelate with sustained education, and therefore integrate protection services with education programming. Finally, further research of greater scale and scope is recommended in host communities to gain a deeper insight into learning levels and barriers to education amongst children and adolescents in host communities.

FINDINGS AT A GLANCE:

- 22% of participating children and adolescents cannot read a letter in Bengali, 48% cannot read a word, and 71% cannot read a simple paragraph
- 27% of participating children and adolescents cannot read a letter in English, 72% cannot read a word, and 87% cannot read a simple paragraph
- 52% of participating children and adolescents are unable to recognise two-digit numbers and 22% are unable to recognise one-digit numbers
- 71% of participating children and adolescents cannot do addition, 90% cannot do subtraction, 96% cannot do multiplication, and 98% cannot do division
- 19% of participants who have been educated to secondary school level (Grades 6-12) were unable to recognise 2-digit numbers, and 20% were unable to read a simple paragraph in Bengali

2. ORGANISATION

121 million school-aged children are currently out of education world-wide. Millions more children are in school but failing to learn. Street Child believes that achieving universal basic education is the single greatest step that can be taken towards the elimination of global poverty. Our Vision is a world where the rights of every child are realised, in particular the right to education.

Street Child is an education specialist with a specific expertise in education in emergencies. Since 2008, Street Child have helped over 200,000 children to go to school and learn across the 2014-16 Ebola epidemic in Liberia and Sierra Leone; the 2015 earthquake response and recovery in Nepal; protracted political crises in Afghanistan, Burundi, DR Congo and Nigeria; and the current refugee crisis in Uganda. Street Child has partnered with local organisations since October 2018 to develop the capacity of local organisations to ensure the quality of the response keeps up with the scale of the response.

This research was supported by staff from Mukti Cox's Bazar. An established partner of Street Child, Mukti Cox's Bazar has worked to build 386 learning centres across 19 camps and worked with 638 teachers to enable access to education for 14677 girls and 16054 boys. Mukti has been a critical contributor to the Rohingya response as an implementing partner of UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNFPA amongst others, across a range of sectors.

3. RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

In the shadows of one of the world's largest refugee crises, there is an equally significant crisis - 30% of children in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, are not enrolled into school at primary level, and 31% of children drop out of school.¹ Whilst enormous progress has been made in providing assistance to the Rohingya community, little has been done to address the parallel crisis in the host community.

Cox's Bazar had limited absorptive capacity for a humanitarian crisis on the scale that occurred when nearly one million Rohingya refugees fled into the district. Prior to the crisis, Cox's Bazar District was one of the lowest performing education districts in Bangladesh. Primary school intake was around 70% (compared to a national average of 98%),² and the dropout rate was one of the highest in the country (31%).³ The literacy rate of Cox's Bazar ranked 60th of 64 Bangladesh districts at 39%.⁴ Exceptionally poor education outcomes are compounded by a high risk profile, with cyclones, flooding, earthquakes, storm surges, tsunami all potential risks facing Cox's Bazar District. These chronic vulnerabilities are long-standing, and the pressure from the refugee crisis has caused acute vulnerabilities.

The use of local resources, a decrease in labourers wages (in crisis-affected Teknaf and Ukhia), overburdened infrastructure, and higher wages in the Rohingya camps, have depleted the resilience of the local population to crisis and conflict. This has affected access to education, notably: reduced teaching time, teachers leaving the host community for the Rohingya, increased student-teacher ratios, reduced access (especially for female students), reduced enrolment rates, and increased dropout rates. This is compounded by tensions between communities: 48% of Bangladeshis in the host community do not think there is harmony between the two communities, compared to 11% of Rohingya.⁵

Whilst there is a large amount of evidence generated on learning outcomes for displaced Rohingya, there is a lack of detailed information about learning levels amongst host communities. In response this report intends to address the lack of accumulated knowledge on learning levels amongst children in host communities, especially for the significant proportion who are presently out-of-school. Furthermore, this report will investigate barriers to education, the extent to which such barriers have been affected by the Rohingya influx, the main protection risks faced by children and adolescents in host communities, and how these may present further barriers to education.

¹ Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (2016)

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Acaps (2018)

⁵ Ground Truth Solutions (2019)

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions for this report fall into two broad categories: A) present learning levels amongst children and adolescents in host communities in Cox's Bazar; and B) barriers to education and the extent to which access to education is affected by protection risks for children and adolescents in host communities in Cox's Bazar. The aim of this research report is to respond to the following questions:

A1 What are the present learning levels amongst children and adolescents in host communities in Cox's Bazar?

A2 How do present learning levels differ between in-school and out-of-school adolescents and children?

A3 How do present learning levels vary by additional of a) gender b) age c) level of previous schooling and d) living status – living with/out parents?

B1 – What are the main barriers to education in host communities in Cox's Bazar? How do they vary by gender? How have such barriers changed since the onset of the Rohingya influx?

B2 – What are the main protection barriers in host communities in Cox's Bazar (and how do they vary by gender)? To what extent do protection barriers interrelate with barriers to education in host communities in Cox's Bazar?

5. PARTNERSHIPS

Street Child's primary education partner, Mukti Cox's Bazar, has coverage in 12 camps and has constructed 325 learning centres which serve 61,462 children aged 3-24. Since 1996, Mukti Cox's Bazar has worked in Cox's Bazar as an NGO and has implemented programme across a diverse range of sectors, including: education, health, women's empowerment, skills development, anti-corruption and disaster management. Mukti has more than 17 years working experience in implementing education and life-skills based programmes.

During the Rohingya crisis Mukti has partnered with UNICEF, VSO, and Handicap International to build a proven track-record in education delivery. The organization has built strong linkages with the government sector, local representatives, influential people in the community, religious leaders and the targeted beneficiaries who are the key stakeholders of our projects.

In line with Street Child's Partnership Framework and selection criteria, Mukti were selected as Street Child's primary education partner in Cox's Bazar due to their deep well of local experience, knowledge and ability to deliver meaningful outcomes in education. Street Child is working with Mukti to provide short-term surge support during the Rohingya crisis whilst providing long term capacity building support.



6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection for this research report took place between 6th and 26th May 2019 in Teknaf and Ukhia Upazilas of Cox's Bazar District. A total of 277 children and adolescents took part in literacy and numeracy assessments to provide a quantitative insight into learning levels in host communities in Cox's Bazar. A total of 48 children and adolescents (24 female and 24 male) took part in 6 focus group discussions to provide a qualitative insight into barriers to education and protection for children and adolescents in host communities in Cox's Bazar.

Street Child acknowledges that the scale and scope of this research would have ideally been larger, however has limited by capacity constraints. The following results and analysis are intended to provide a snapshot than a comprehensive study into education in host communities, and therefore results should be regarded as indicative rather than representative of children and adolescents in host communities.

To support the data collection process Street Child leveraged Mukti Cox's Bazar's established presence and networks in Teknaf and Ukhia Upazilas to support the data collection process. In order to identify out-of-learning children and adolescent participants, literacy and numeracy assessments were conducted through a random household survey method of door-to-door visits. All Research participants were school-aged children and adolescents aged between 6 and 18. Due to a dearth of data on out-of-school children and adolescents, the majority of literacy and numeracy assessments were conducted with those who were out-of-school – with a proportion of in-school children and adolescents sampled to allow for a comparable benchmark on learning levels using this assessment method. For literacy and numeracy assessments sampling methods sought to achieve a balanced ratio by gender and age; the degree to which this was achieved will be discussed further below. Participating children and adolescents were informed of the opportunity for further participation in focus group discussions, with the first 24 male and 24 female children and adolescents who expressed interest selected. 6 focus group discussions were conducted on the premises of Mukti community spaces.

For participation in literacy and numeracy assessments and focus group participation, researchers gained informed, voluntary and renegotiable consent from parents/caregivers of children/adolescents and assent from children and adolescents. Where children/adolescents declined to take part, their view was respected regardless of whether parents/caregivers consented. Consent provided by parents/caregivers was provided verbally as written consent was deemed inappropriate in the context due to the low adult literacy in Cox's Bazar District. Children/adolescents and parents/caregivers were provided with explanation of the research aims, information about Street Child and Mukti, contact information of researchers, and how the information would be used in future. Furthermore, it was ensured that adolescents and parents/caregivers felt that they could say refuse participation or further participation at any point in the process – mindful of the power dynamics inherent between NGOs and local host communities. Subsequent use of data following collection ensured the application of strict data protection protocols that ensure full confidentiality of participant's data at all times, including the anonymous storage of literacy and numeracy assessment and focus group discussion data.

LITERACY AND NUMERACY ASSESSMENTS

In order to conduct literacy and numeracy assessments Street Child adapted the ASER-PLUS assessments to measure learning levels in reading and arithmetic. The ASER-PLUS assessment tool has been employed by the Education Sector in December 2018 to determine the learning levels of Rohingya children in learning centres in camps in Burmese, English and Mathematics, the tool was modified to replace Burmese reading assessments with Bengali reading assessments. As an assessment tool used by the Education Sector, the ASER-PLUS assessment provides a body of evidence familiar to the Education Sector and partners. Furthermore Street Child has experience with the ASER method, having conducted a province-wide assessment of learning levels amongst children in-school children aged 5-16 in Nepal in March 2019. Using this method, adolescents' learning levels are assessed through one-to-one oral assessments.

For literacy assessments, students are assigned learning levels based on their reading abilities – ranging from beginner (unable to recognise letters) to letter- and word-recognition abilities to the ability to read simple paragraphs, short stories and complete basic comprehension exercises.

For arithmetic assessments, students are assigned learning levels based on: I) number recognition – ability to identify numbers of various place values – ranging from beginner (no digit recognition) to one-digit and two-digit recognition; and II) number operations – ability to carry out the four basic mathematical operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division). For operations, adolescents are given a pen and paper to conduct their workings-out of questions. All of the above assessments are untimed, allowing ample time for adolescents to progress through the assessment at their own pace.

Figure 6.1 – Literacy and numeracy assessment participants by location – disaggregated by gender, prior schooling, age and living status

	Gender		Age			Presently in school		Living with Parents	
	Female	Male	6-10	11-13	14-18	Yes	No	Yes	No
Teknaf (139)	80	59	7	44	88	8	131	131	8
Ukhia (138)	74	64	73	17	48	31	107	135	3
All (277)	154	123	80	61	136	39	238	266	11

A profile of research participants for literacy and numeracy assessment is shown above in Figure 6.1. Half of those surveyed were in Teknaf Upazila (139) and Ukhia Upazila (138). Of all participants surveyed in both Upazilas 154 were female (56%) and 123 were male (44%). Amongst all participants 80 were aged 5-10 (29%), 61 were aged 11-13 (22%) and 136 were aged 14-18 (49%). The vast majority of children and adolescents surveyed – 266 – live with their parents (96%), with 11 not living with parents (4%). As mentioned above the vast majority of children and adolescents targeted for the study were out of school, with 39 surveyed presently in-school (14%) and 238 out-of-school (86%). Figure 6.2 shows the level of prior schooling reached by all participants in literacy and numeracy assessments. Of all 277 participants a significant number – 50 – have no prior schooling (18%), 214 have been educated

to primary school level (77%) from Grades 1-5, however just 13 participants have been educated to secondary school level (5%) from Grades 6-12.

Figure 6.2 – Literacy and numeracy assessment participants by level of prior schooling

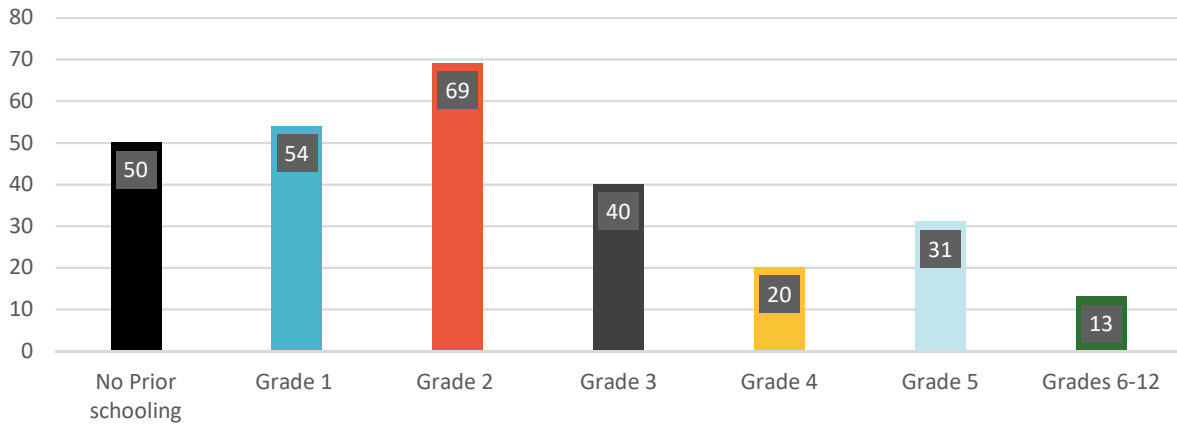


Figure 6.3 – Age grouping of literacy and numeracy assessment participants with no prior schooling

Using recorded data from literacy and numeracy assessments a systematic analysis identified trends in learning levels across lines of gender, age, in-school/out-of-school status, levels of prior education and living status, with the key trends presented in later sections.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A total of 6 focus groups were carried out with 48 children and adolescents overall – gender segregated between groups of boys and girls (3 focus groups with 8 boys each and 3 focus groups with 8 girls each). Focus groups were gender segregated in order to facilitate conversation on more sensitive topics, especially relating to protection risks; focus groups were conducted by Street Child field staff.

Focus groups were carried out in a semi-structured format – Street Child field staff asked a series of preordained questions around barriers to education and protection for children and adolescents and unstructured follow-up questions based upon responses. Focus groups were conducted in Bengali language. With consent from parents/caregivers and assent from all participating children and adolescents, focus groups were recorded and transcribed in a manner which ensured the preservation of anonymity at all times. In addition, detailed notes were taken during focus groups. Transcripts and notes of focus groups were then coded and analysed to reveal broad thematic trends prevalent across multiple focus group discussions. These thematic trends are presented in the following section.

7. RESULTS

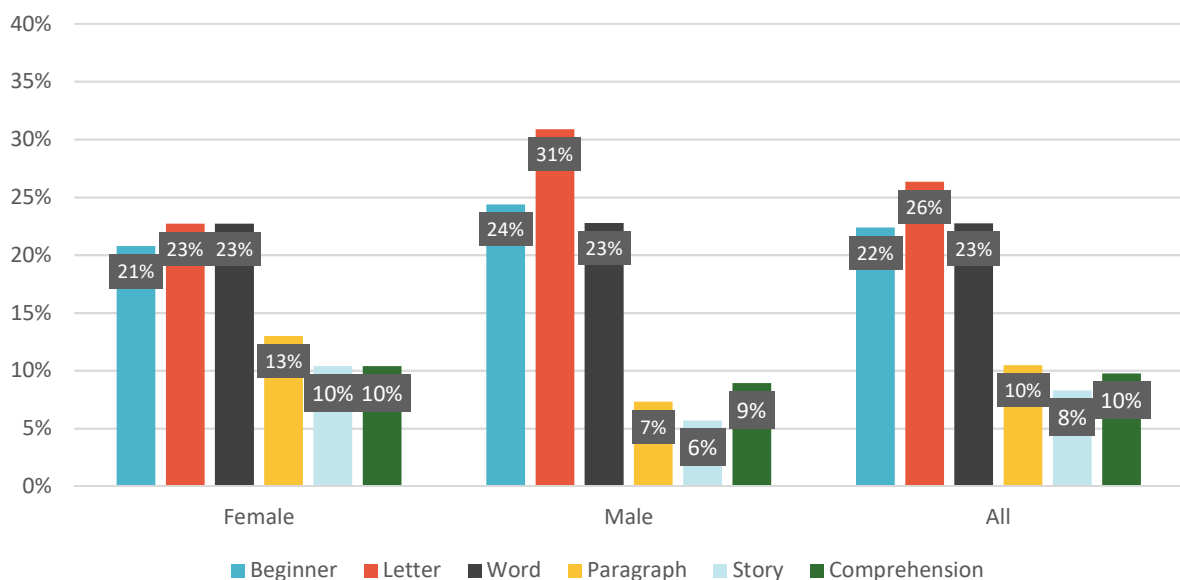
The following section outlines the results from literacy and numeracy assessments and focus group discussions. The section outlines results in four subsections: I) Bengali learning outcomes; II) English learning outcomes; III) Mathematics learning outcomes; and IV) education and protection challenges.

7.1 BENGALI LEARNING OUTCOMES

Results for learning levels in Bengali are outlined in Figure 7.1. Of all participating children and adolescents 22% are Beginner level in Bengali, 26% are at Letter level in Bengali, 23% are at Word level in Bengali, 10% are at Paragraph level in Bengali, 8% are at Story level in Bengali and 10% are at Comprehension level.

Figure 7.1 shows a gender split in learning levels in Bengali reading with females showing higher learning levels; one-third of all females achieving paragraph level and above – compared to 22% of males. A majority of males (55%) were found to be below Word level in Bengali with 24% at Beginner level and 31% at Letter level. A significant yet lesser proportion of females were found to be below Word level in Bengali (44%) with 21% at Beginner level and 23% at Letter level.

Figure 7.1 – Bengali Literacy Levels of all participants



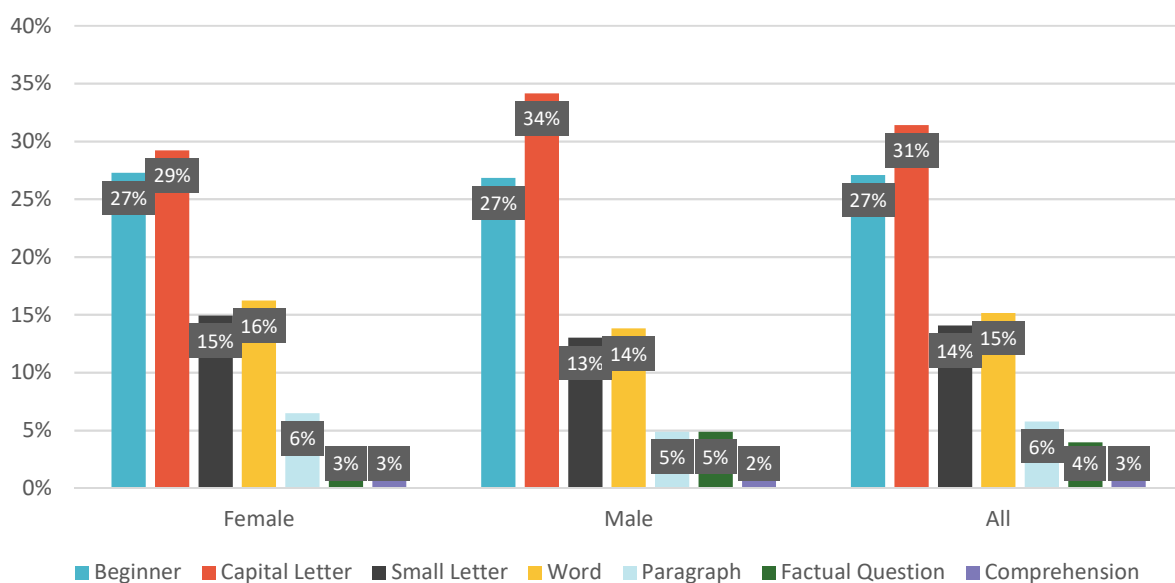
7.2 ENGLISH LEARNING OUTCOMES

Results for learning levels in English are outlined in Figure 7.2. Of all participating children and adolescents 27% are Beginner level in English, 45% are at Letter level in English

(31% with capital letter recognition and 14% with small letter recognition), 15% are at Word level in English, 6% are at Paragraph level in English, 4% are at Factual Question level in English and 3% are at Comprehension level.

Compared the Bengali results, learning levels for English reading appear more balanced between genders; both 12% of females and males read above Paragraph level in English. The majority of males and females read below Word level – 71% of females and 74% of males. 27% of both males and females are at Beginner level in English, whilst 44% of females and 47% of males read at Letter level.

Figure 7.2 – English Literacy Levels of all participants



7.3 MATHEMATICS LEARNING OUTCOMES

Results for Mathematics assessments are outlined in Figures 7.3 and 7.4. Of all participating children and adolescents 22% are beginners in number recognition, 30% could recognise one-digit numbers and 48% could recognise two-digit numbers. Furthermore, with mathematical operations 29% of participating children and adolescents could perform addition, 10% could perform subtraction, 4% could perform multiplication and 2% could perform division.

Results for number recognition show little variation by gender – with 21% and 22% of females and males as beginners in number recognition, 30% and 31% of females and males able to recognise one-digit numbers, and 49% and 47% of females and males able to recognise two-digit numbers. Findings are similar for mathematical operations with 30% and 28% of females and males able to perform addition, 11% and 10% of females and males able to perform subtraction, 5% and 4% of females and males able to perform multiplication, and 2% of females and males able to perform division.

Figure 7.3 – Numeracy: Number Recognition results for all participants

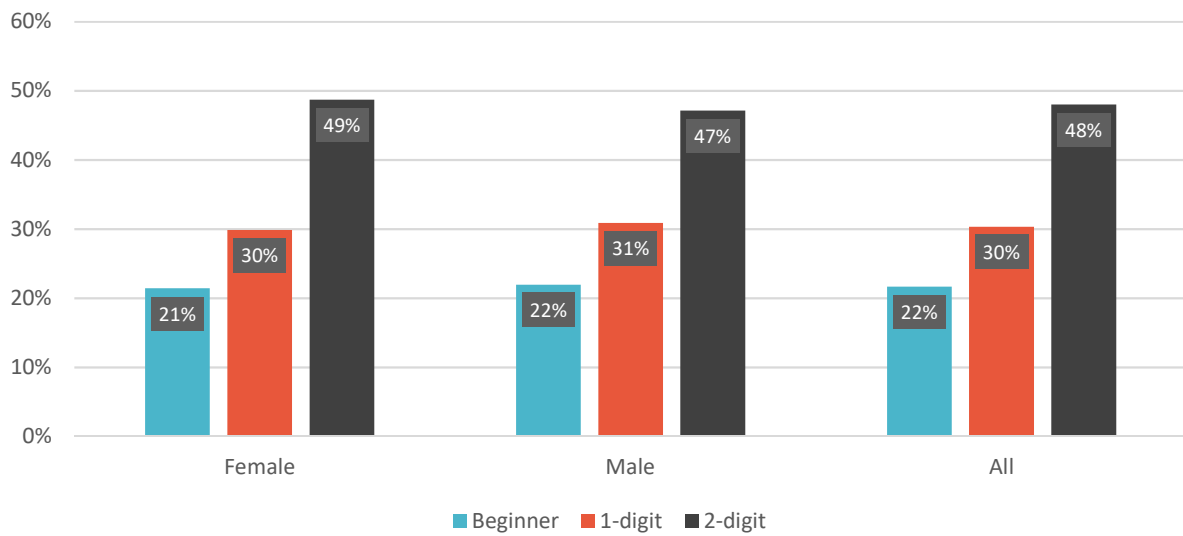
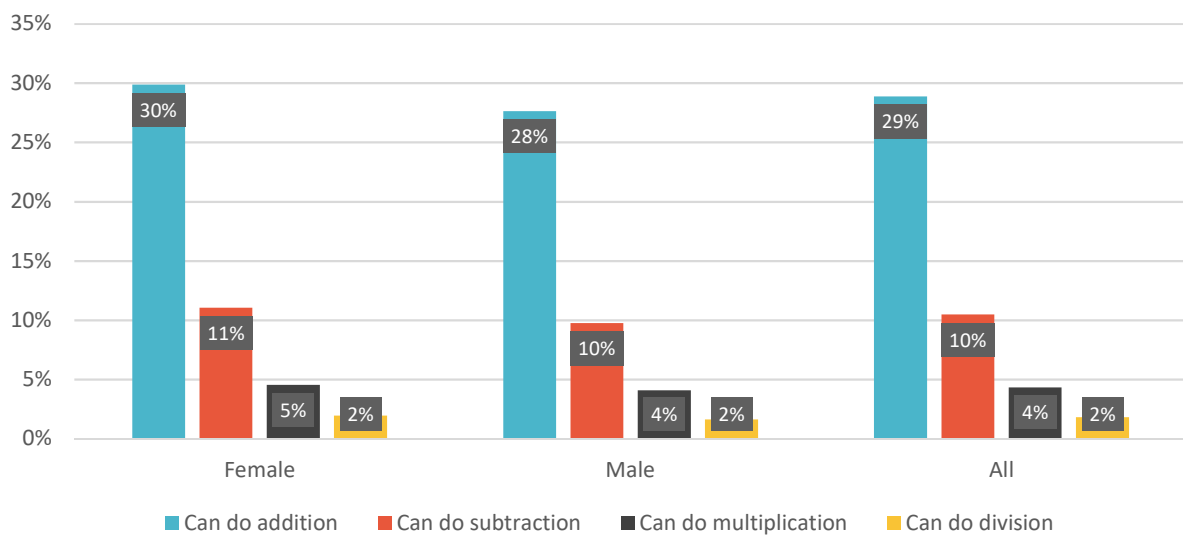


Figure 7.4 – Numeracy: Mathematical Operations results for all participants



7.4 EDUCATION AND PROTECTION CHALLENGES

Results from focus group discussions with children and adolescents in host communities are displayed in the tables of Figure 7.5 and 7.6, with general observations and gendered observations of issues particular to boys and girls.

Figure 7.5 – Education challenges for children and adolescents in host communities

Education Challenges: General

Government primary and secondary schools are situated far from the homes of children and adolescents live, with an inability to carry out the daily commute causing drop outs

Insufficient places available for students in government high schools. This results in many children dropping out of education after primary school

Lack of awareness amongst parents of the benefits of education. Many parents without education themselves

Families are faced with costs for their child’s education including materials and fees for public examinations. Government school teachers offer private tuition inaccessible for poorer students

A large number of children and adolescents have dropped out of education because of household poverty creating obligations to support their parents and family

Provision of few education services from NGOs, who are deemed to focus solely on education for Rohingya displacees

There has been a decline in quality of education in schools, as many teachers in government schools have sought opportunities from NGOs in learning centres in camps

Education Challenges: Gendered

Challenges for boys

Boys are often forced to discontinue their studies due to household poverty. They are often required to instead to provide income support through work

Challenges for girls

Girls are often forced to discontinue their studies as they are required to partake domestic work at home

Girls expressed that parents often undervalue girl’s education due to entrenched social norms

Figure 7.6 – Protection challenges for children and adolescents in host communities

Protection Challenges: General

Lack of provision in protection services from government and NGOs – of which the latter focuses solely on providing protection services to Rohingya displaces.

Poor access to law enforcement support due to a lack of knowledge accessing services, and lack of willingness to seek support due to the taboo nature of protection risks

Participants expressed a fear of being outside after dark due to the heightening of multiple forms of protection risks including forms of physical and sexual violence, robbery and kidnapping

Protection Challenges: Gendered

Challenges for boys

Boys are often involved in hazardous forms of child labour including construction work, wood collection, and service work in shops and hotels

Boys are at an increase risks of involvement with drugs – including susceptibility to drug abuse as well as involvement in drug trafficking

Challenges for girls

Girls face protection risks of sexual harassment and sexual and gender-based violence. Harassment comes in the form of ‘eve-teasing’ in public place. Girls described increased risk physical and sexual home-based violence stemming from a lack of awareness amongst girls and wider communities.

Girls expressed concern over being subjected to childhood marriage and early pregnancy

8. ANALYSIS

Results for this study of children and adolescents in host communities show a range of learning levels in reading and arithmetic. Literacy and numeracy assessments broadly show a lack of foundational skills as shown by learning levels of children and adolescents in Bengali, English and Mathematics.

Present learning levels as shown in the above results will be further discussed in the first sub-section. The second sub-section will distinguish the differences in learning levels between children and adolescents in host communities who are in-school and out-of-school. The third sub-section will analyse how learning levels vary across other lines including the gender, age and background. The final two sub-section will interpret the results of focus group discussion, with the fourth sub-section examining the main barriers to education for children

and adolescents in host communities, and the fifth sub-section examining barriers to protection and the extent to which these interrelate with barriers to education.

8.1 PRESENT LEARNING LEVELS

Results for Bengali reading assessments indicate that 22% of children and adolescents surveyed cannot read a letter in Bengali, 48% cannot read a word in Bengali, and 71% cannot read a simple paragraph in Bengali. 28% of respondents were able to read a simple paragraph in Bengali. Beyond this level only a small proportion (18%) were able to read a simple story, and just 10% of respondents were able to complete a basic comprehension exercise based upon the story.

Results for English reading assessments indicate that 27% of children and adolescents surveyed cannot read a letter in English, 72% cannot read a word in English, and 87% cannot read a simple paragraph in English. Only 13% of respondents were able to read a simple paragraph in English. Beyond this level 7% of respondents could answer a factual question based on the paragraph, and 3% could complete a basic comprehension exercise based on the paragraph.

Results for Mathematics assessments found that 52% of children and adolescents surveyed cannot recognise two-digit numbers and that 22% cannot recognise one-digit numbers. With mathematical operations 71% of children and adolescents surveyed were found to be unable to perform addition, 90% unable to perform subtraction, 96% unable to perform multiplication and 98% unable to perform division.

8.2 LEARNING LEVELS BETWEEN IN-SCHOOL & OUT-OF-SCHOOL

With the main focus of this study intending to fill the gap in knowledge on the learning levels of out-of-school children and adolescents, the majority of participants in literacy and numeracy assessments (86%). As shown in Figure 8.1. A number of in-school students were sampled (14%) as shown in Figure 8.1. This sample intends to determine the extent to which there is a learning gap present between in-school and out-of-school children and adolescents in host communities, which will be analysed in this section through learning outcomes in Bengali, English and Mathematics. It must be noted that the sample size of 39 in-school participants creates a higher margin of error for the analysis in this section.

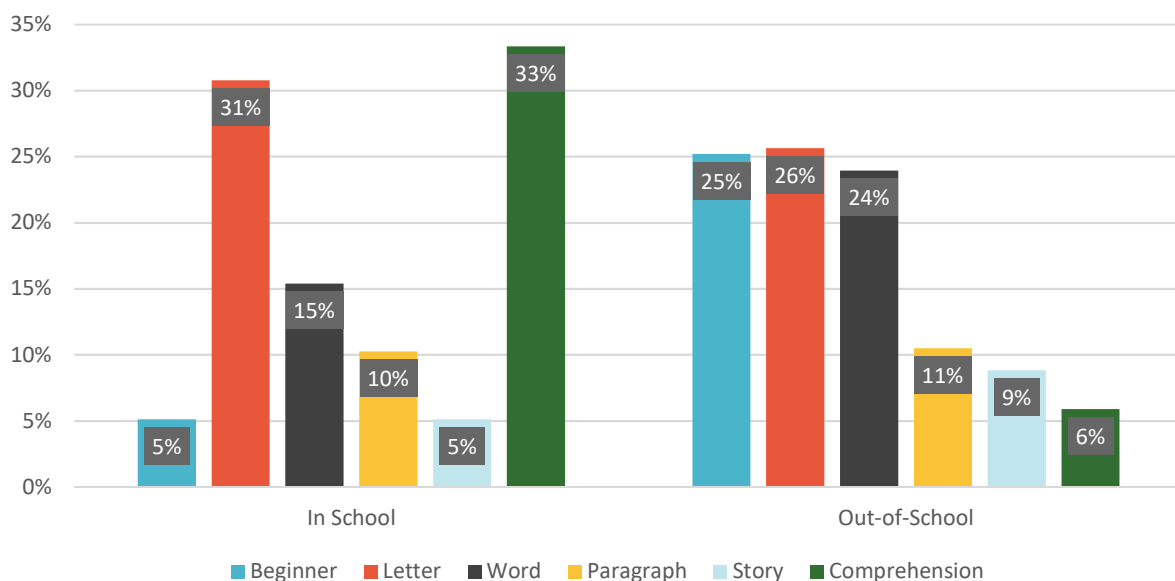
Figure 8.1 – All literacy and numeracy assessment participants by education status – disaggregated by gender, age and living status

	Gender		Age			Living with Parents		Prior Schooling Average Grade Level Reached
	Female	Male	6-10	11-13	14-18	Yes	No	
In-School (39)	18	21	23	7	9	39	0	3.3
Out-of-school (238)	123	115	57	54	127	227	11	2.2

BENGALI

Figure 8.2 shows the variation in learning levels for Bengali according to education status. As would be expected Bengali reading assessment results show higher attainment for in-school children and adolescents with significance⁶, with almost half (48%) of in-school participants able to read a simple paragraph, compared to a quarter of out-of-school students (26%). One-third of all in-school students were at comprehension level, achieving mastery of foundational reading skills. On the other end of the scale 36% of in-school students were unable to identify words in Bengali, which rose to half of all out-of-school participants (51%). The significant proportion of in-school students unable to recognise words in Bengali is unexpected, however this is likely a result of sampling bias; participant statistics in Figure 8.1 shows that 59% of in-school participants are aged 6-10, of whom lower learning levels can be expected. Furthermore, the average age of in-school respondents below word level was 7, compared to an average age of 13 for in-school participants who were at least able to read a simple paragraph. As may be expected this trend clearly shows evidence of progression in Bengali reading through schooling. On the other hand, the average age of out-of-school participants who were unable to recognise words was 12 years of age and 14 years for those who could, showing a weaker trend for progression with age. Further this indicates that non-enrolment has a significant and detrimental effect upon Bengali literacy.

Figure 8.2 – Learning levels for Bengali by education status



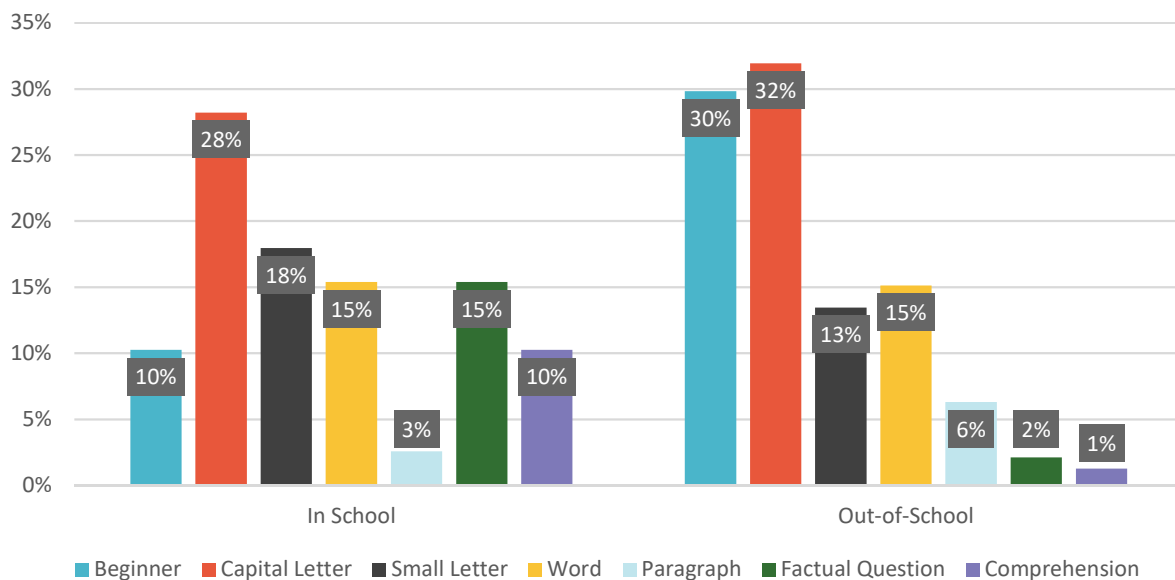
ENGLISH

Figure 8.3 shows the variation in learning levels for English by education status. As expected, the results clearly show higher learning levels for in-school children and adolescents

⁶ P=.009 as shown in Annex B

with some statistical significance⁷, with 43% of in-school participants able to recognise words in English, compared to just 21% of out-of-school participants. A quarter of in-school respondents (25%) were able to successfully respond to a factual question or comprehension exercise in addition to reading a simple paragraph in English, compared to just 3% of out-of-school participants. On the other end of the scale 56% of in-school participants were unable to recognise words in English, which rose to 75% of out-of-school participants. Once again, a sampling bias likely explains why over half of in-school students were unable to recognise words in English, with the average age of in-school students unable to recognise words in English being 8 years compared to 13 years for those who can. In contrast the average age of out-of-school participants unable to recognise words in English was 13 years, and 14 years for those who can – once again showing little sign of progression with age in English for out-of-school children and adolescents.

Figure 8.3 – Learning levels for Bengali by education status



MATHEMATICS

Figures 8.4 and 8.5 show the variation in learning outcomes for mathematics assessments, both number recognition and mathematical operations. For number recognition results show a less statistically significant relationship⁸ between number recognition and education status, with Figure 8.4 showing 59% of in-school and 46% of out-of-school participants able to recognise two-digit numbers. This could be explained by Figure 8.1 which shows that out-of-school participants have had some prior schooling, with the average grade level reached as 2.2. 25% of out-of-school participants nonetheless were worryingly unable to

⁷ P=.024 as shown in Annex B

⁸ P=.269 as shown in Annex B

recognise even one-digit numbers, one-third of which were between 14 and 18 years of age, and the average age of this grouping being 11 years.

Education status appears to have a stronger influence on children and adolescent’s ability to perform mathematical operations, with Figure 8.5 showing that 74% of out-of-school participants were unable to do addition, which drops to 51% of in-school participants. As with literacy assessments the average age of in-school participants who can and cannot perform addition shows progression with age, with the average age of those who can add as 13 years and 8 years for those who cannot. In contrast the average age of out-of-school participants who could not add was 13 years, compared with 14 years for those who can. This shows less of a trend of progression with age for out-of-school children and adolescents.

Figure 8.4 – Number recognition by education status

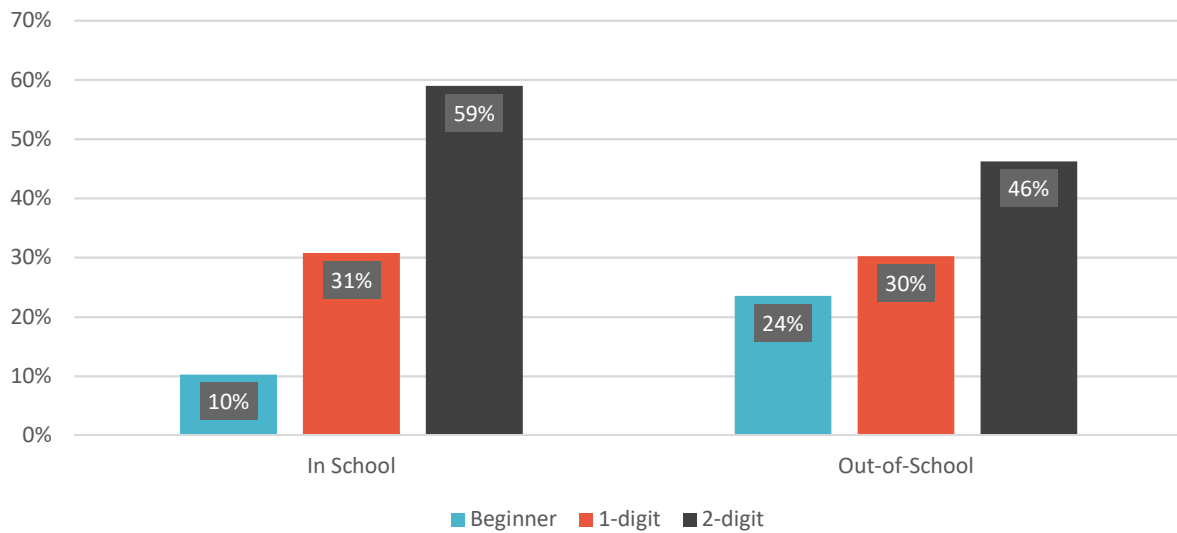
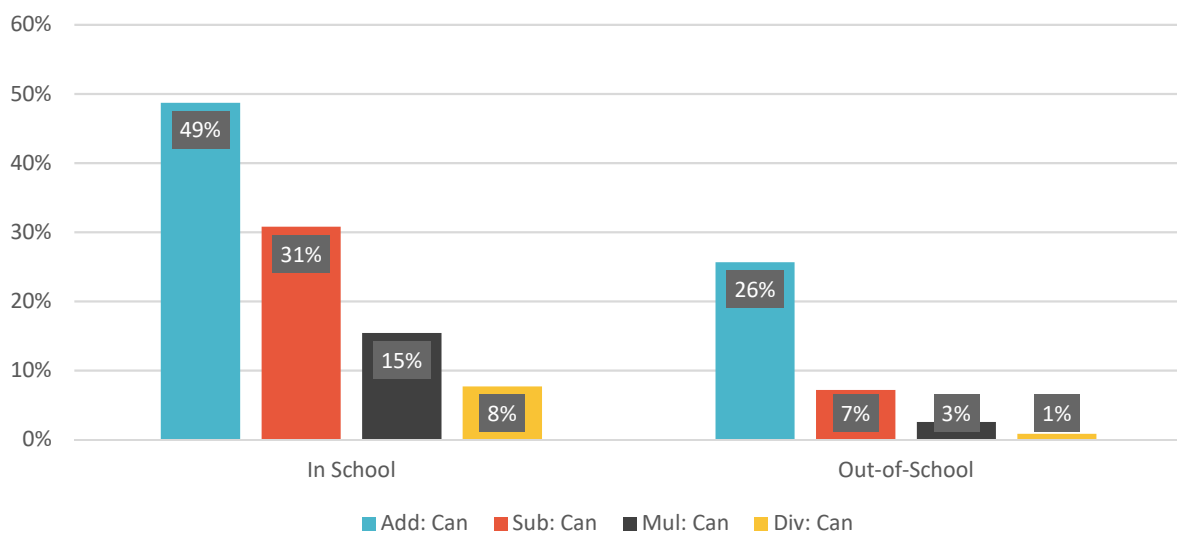


Figure 8.5 – Mathematical operations by education status



8.3 LEARNING LEVELS BY GENDER, AGE AND BACKGROUND

In order to determine how learning levels vary by gender, age and background – whether children and adolescents live at home, the results for literacy and numeracy assessments are shown, differentiated for each of these factors.

GENDER AND LEARNING LEVEL

Figures 8.6 and Figure 8.7 show the results of reading assessments in Bengali and English. The most discernible trend for both figures is the broad similarity in learning outcomes for literacy between males and females.

Figure 8.6 depicts learning levels in Bengali. Whilst outcomes for reading are broadly similar and variation in outcome shows a low statistical significance,⁹ females are shown to have slightly higher levels of attainment. One-third of females (33%) were able to read a simple paragraph in Bengali compared to 22% of male participants. On the other end of the scale a significant proportion of both males and females severely lack foundational skills in Bengali, with 55% of males and 44% of females found to be unable to read a word in Bengali.

Figure 8.7 shows learning levels for English reading assessments by gender. Like Bengali reading, females participants are shown to have marginally higher learning levels than their male counterparts – with 43% of females able to recognise words in English, compared with 39% of male participants. A majority of both males and females were found to be on Beginner or letter levels for English, with 71% of females and 74% of males unable to recognise words in English.

Figure 8.6 – Learning levels for Bengali by gender

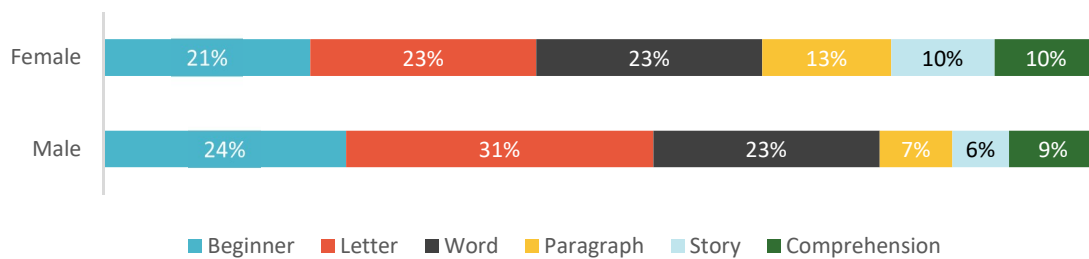
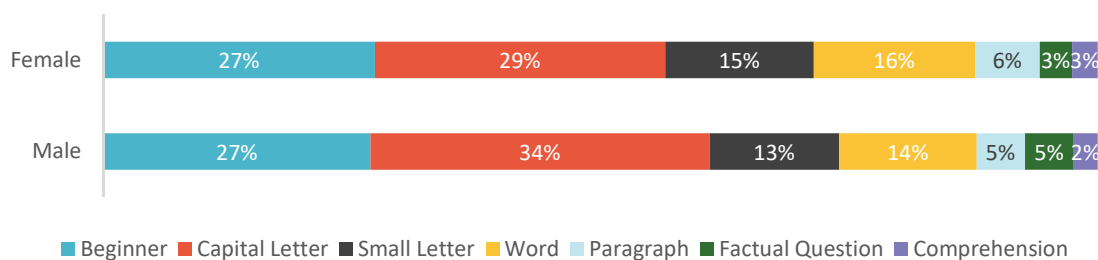


Figure 8.7 – Learning levels for English by gender



⁹ P=.235 as shown in Annex B

Figures 8.8 and 8.9 show the results of mathematical assessments by gender, for both number recognition and mathematical operations.

For number recognition, variations in results by gender indicate a low statistical significance.¹⁰ Figure 8.8 shows number recognition by gender with almost half of all females (49%) and males (47%) able to recognise two-digit numbers, and on the other hand 21% and 22% of females and males unable to recognise one-digit numbers respectively. Likewise, for number operations results indicate low statistical significance by gender for all operations.¹¹ Figure 8.9 shows these similar abilities mathematical operations with 70% and 68% females and males unable to perform addition respectively, and 89% and 90% of female and male participants unable to perform subtraction respectively.

Figure 8.8 – Number recognition by gender

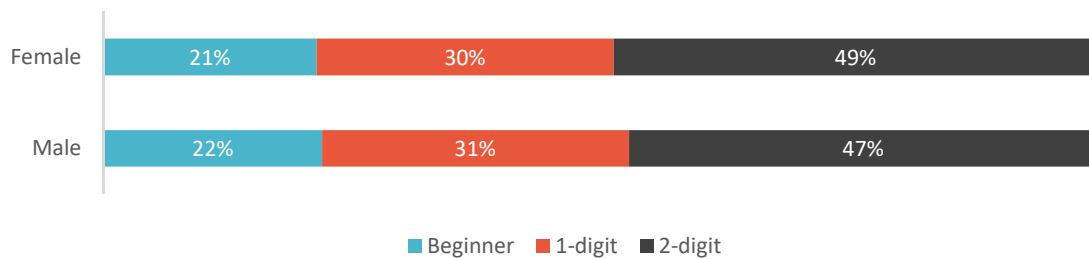
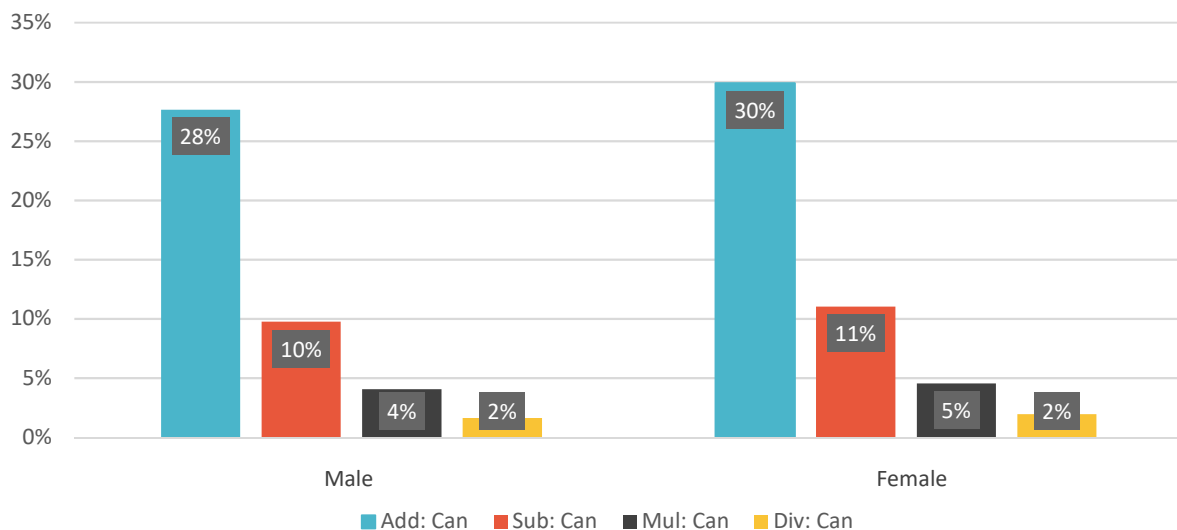


Figure 8.9 – Mathematical operations by gender



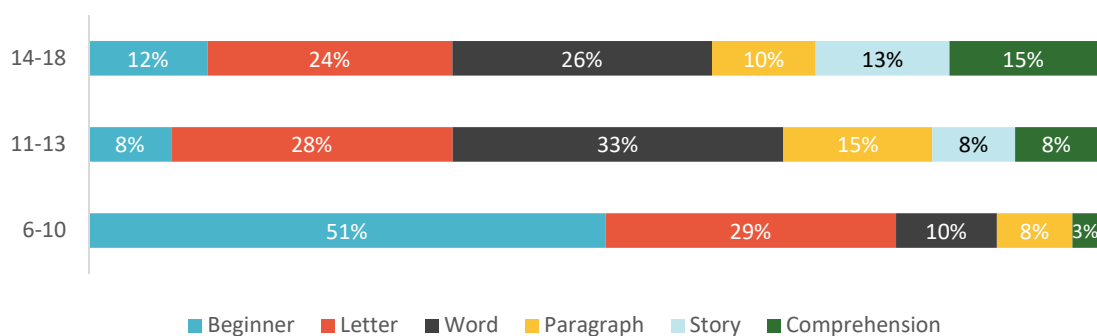
¹⁰ P=.050 as shown in Annex B

¹¹ For addition P=.103, for subtraction P=.182, for multiplication P=.239 and for division P=.219 as shown in Annex B

AGE AND LEARNING LEVEL

Figure 8.10 shows the results of Bengali reading assessments. As may be expected learning levels broadly correlate positively with age, with higher proportion of children and adolescents achieving paragraph level increasing for the older cohorts of participants. These results have a strong statistical significance.¹² The proportion of primary school-aged 6 to 10-year olds able to read a simple paragraph in Bengali is 11%, which increases to 31% of the secondary school-aged 11 to 13-year-old and up to 38% of 14 to 18-year olds. On the other end of the scale the proportion of primary-aged children aged 6 to 10 unable to read words in Bengali is 80%, which drops and levels off at 36% of the 11 to 13-year-old and 14 to 10-year old cohorts. With over one-third of secondary school-aged participants unable to read words in Bengali, this reveals a significant learning gap amongst the elder cohorts of children and adolescents in host communities. To further dissect the relationship between age and learning level for Bengali, Figure 8.11 depicts learning levels in Bengali by years of age for all participants aged 12 to 18.¹³ The graph shows little correlation between learning level and age, with the proportion of participants unable to recognise words fluctuating, with the same trend for those who can read simple paragraphs. This suggests that for children and adolescents, the majority of whom are out-of-school, any improvements in Bengali literacy will level off with age – which likely stems from a lack of available learning opportunities. A significant proportion of 15-, 16- and 17-18-year olds lack basic reading skills in Bengali, with 63%, 67% and 56% unable to read words in Bengali. The spike in adolescents aged 17-18 unable to recognise letters could be attributed to a sampling bias, with 36% in this age cohort having had no prior schooling – compared to just 18% of all participants in literacy and numeracy assessments.

Figure 8.10 – Learning levels for Bengali by age



¹² P=.000 as shown in Annex B

¹³ Ages 17 and 18 are represented in one grouping due to lower individual sample sizes

Figure 8.11 – Learning levels for Bengali for secondary school-aged children (12-18)

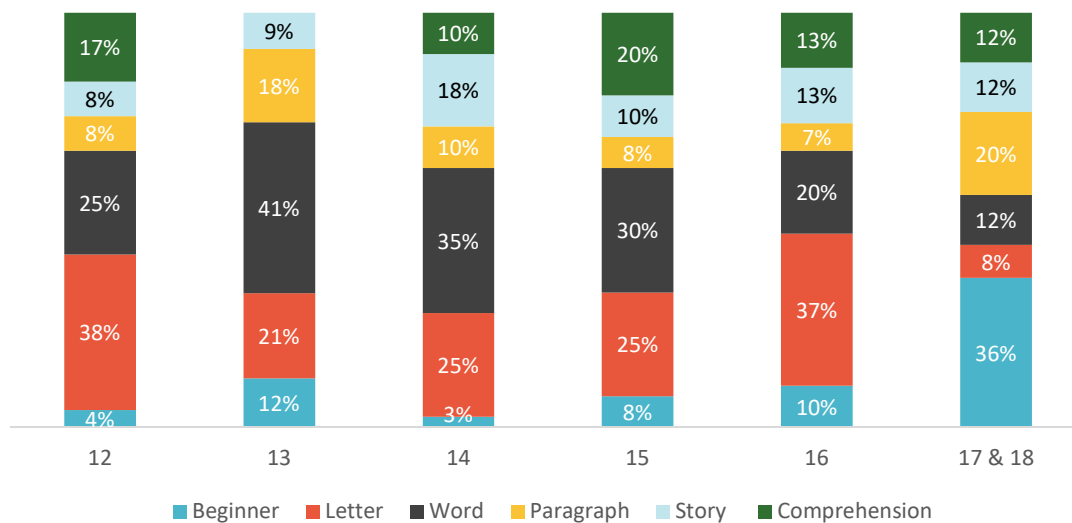
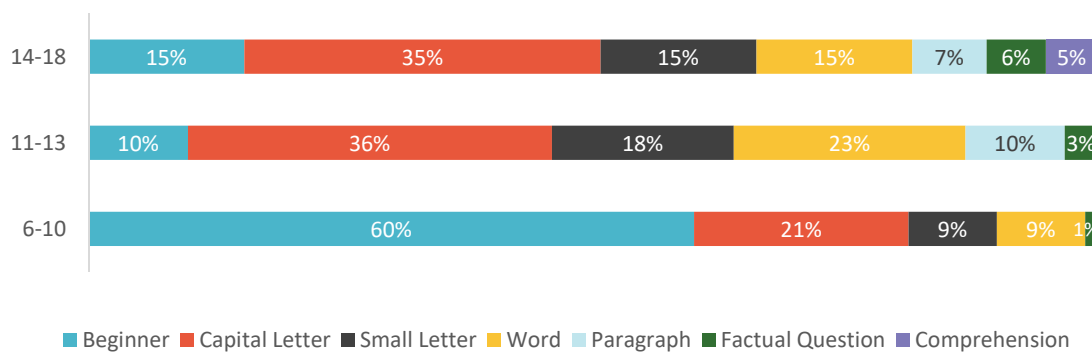


Figure 8.12 depicts learning levels from English reading assessments by age category. As with Bengali results, there is a broad trend towards higher learning levels for the elder cohorts of participants of secondary school age, with a strong statistical significance.¹⁴ However this once again appears to level off with no improvement in learning levels from the 11 to 13 age group to the 14 to 18 age group. Literacy assessment results in fact appear to be worse for 14 to 18-year olds than for 11 to 13-year olds; the proportion of 6 to 10-year olds able to recognise words in English is 10%, which increases to 36% of 11 to 13-year olds and drops slightly to 33% of 14 to 18-year olds. On the other end of the scale, the proportion of 6 to 10-year olds unable to recognise letters in English is 60%, which drops significantly to 10% of 11 to 13-year olds, then rises to 15% of 14 to 18-year olds. This levelling off in attainment at secondary school age once again shows the effects of insufficient access to education services appear to be detrimental for English and Bengali literacy alike.

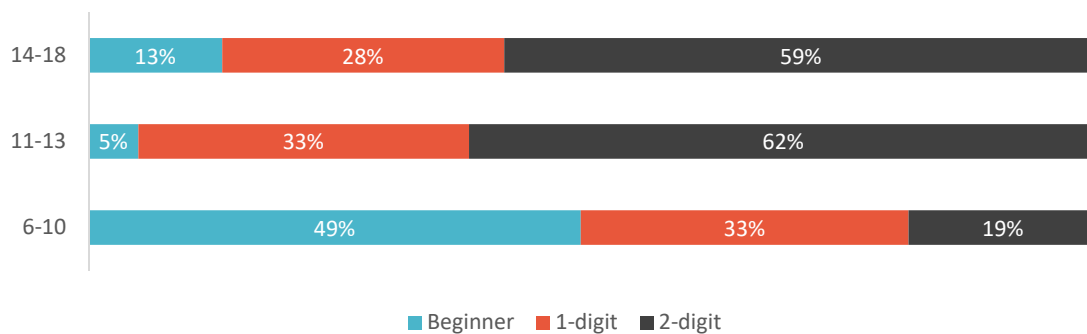
Figure 8.12 – Learning levels for English by age



¹⁴ P=.007 as shown in Annex B

Figure 8.13 shows the number recognition assessment results by age category. The results depict a similar trend to literacy assessments in terms of the relationship between age and learning level with statistical significance.¹⁵ The youngest cohort aged 6 to 10 years show the lowest learning levels, which decrease significantly into the 11 to 13 age group, with no improvement in learning levels for the eldest age group aged 14 to 18 years (which interestingly shows a dip in learning levels as with literacy assessments in Bengali and English). The proportion of students able to recognise two-digit numbers is 19% of 6 to 10-year olds, which sharply rises to 62% of 11 to 13-year olds and then drops slightly to 59% of 14 to 18-year olds. On the other end of the scale the proportion of 6 to 10-year olds unable to recognise a one-digit number stands at 49%, which drops down to 5% of 11 to 13-year olds and then rises significantly to 13% of 14 to 18-year olds. Due to this unexpected relationship of worsening results in number recognition in the elder two categories, Figure 8.14 dissects number recognition by years of age from 12 to 18 years old.¹⁶ Unlike Figure 8.11 which shows more sporadic results amongst individual years of age and Bengali learning levels, Figure 8.14 shows a clear negative correlation between age and learning level, with the proportion of participants aged 12 unable to recognise one-digit numbers as 4%, which gradually increases until reaching a high point of 32% of 17 and 18 year old participants. Whilst not as strongly negatively correlated as those on beginner level, the proportion of participants able to recognise two-digit numbers shows a similar relationship, with ages 12 and 14 showing the largest proportion of participants able to recognise two-digit numbers (67% and 73% respectively) before reaching a low of 40% of the eldest grouping aged 17 to 18 years.

Figure 8.13 – Number recognition by age



¹⁵ P=.004 as shown in Annex B

¹⁶ As before, Ages 17 and 18 are represented in one grouping due to lower individual sample sizes

Figure 8.14 – Number recognition for secondary school-aged children (12-18)

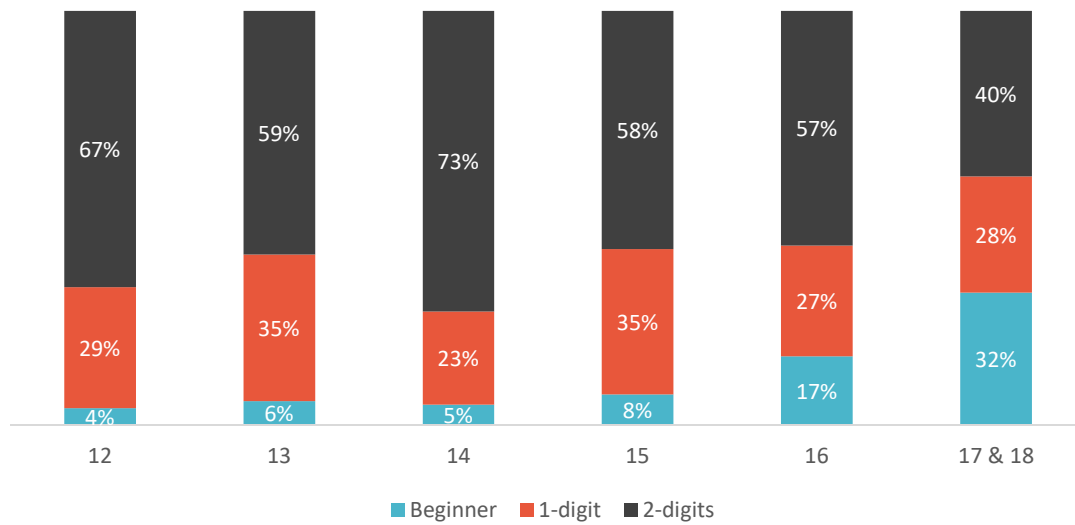
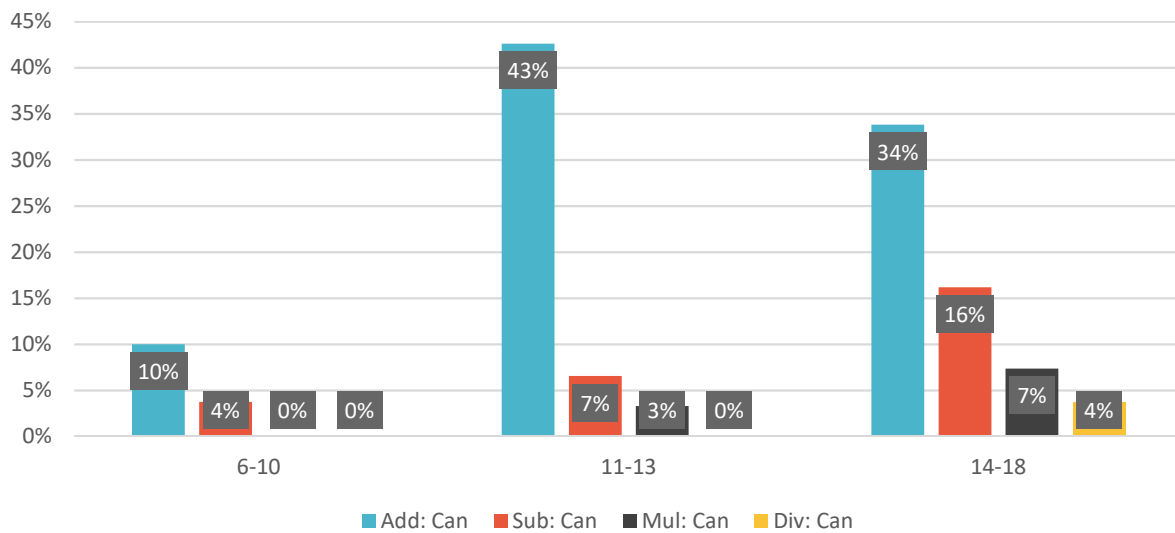


Figure 8.15 shows the results of mathematical operations assessments by age grouping. As with literacy assessments and the other numeracy assessment of number recognition, the middle age category of participants shows the strongest results in ability to perform addition; 10% of 6 to 10-year olds are able to do addition, rising to 43% of 11 to 13-year olds and then dropping to 34% of 14 to 18-year olds. Interestingly the results for addition are a unique trend for mathematical operations and age, with results in subtraction, multiplication and division showing a positive correlation between age and ability to perform these particular operations. For example, the proportion of participants able to perform addition is 4% of 6 to 10-year olds, rising to 7% of 11 to 13-year olds and then reaching a height of 16% for the 14 to 18-year old grouping. Likewise, no respondent between ages 6 and 13 – the two younger age categories, were able to perform division – yet 4% of 14 to 18-year olds were able to do so.

Figure 8.15 – Mathematical operations by age



LIVING STATUS AND LEARNING LEVEL

The following section show the results for literacy and numeracy assessments by living status – whether or not participant children and adolescents are living with or without their parents. A necessary caveat for this section is margin of error resulting from the sample size of the latter group – of all participants 11 (4%) were not living with their parents, as opposed to the majority of 266 participants who were. These results indicate linkage between children and adolescent’s living with parents and their learning levels in Bengali, English and Mathematics, although given the sample size and extremely low statistical significance¹⁷ we cannot draw definitive conclusions.

Figure 8.16 depicts learning levels for Bengali by living status. As might be expected the cohort of participants living with parents show higher levels of literacy attainment, with 30% of participants living with parents able to read a simple paragraph in Bengali as opposed to just 1 of the 11 participants living with parents (9%). On the other end of the scale the proportion of respondents unable to read words in Bengali is similar between living status categories – just under half of those living with parents (49%) unable to compared with 54% of those not living with parents. The difference in results by living status is however clearer at a more foundational level – with 22% of participants living with parents unable to recognise letters in Bengali, compared with 36% of those not living with parents. Although the margin of error induced by the sample size of participants not living with parents prohibits the drawing of any conclusion on the matter, the similarity in proportion of participants could indicates a lesser impact of living status upon learning levels in Bengali beyond letter level.

Figure 8.17 shows learning levels for English by living status. As with Bengali reading assessment results, a higher proportion of participants achieving higher levels attainment are recorded amongst the category of children and adolescents living with parents; 28% of participants living with parents could read words in English, compared to just 1 of the 11 participants (9%) not living with their parents. On the other end of the scale the proportion of

¹⁷ For aggregated results across all literacy and numeracy assessments $P=.401$ as shown in Annex B

participants unable to recognise letters in English stands at 27% of participants living with parents, compared to 36% of participants not living with parents.

Figure 8.16 – Learning levels for Bengali by living status – with or not with parents

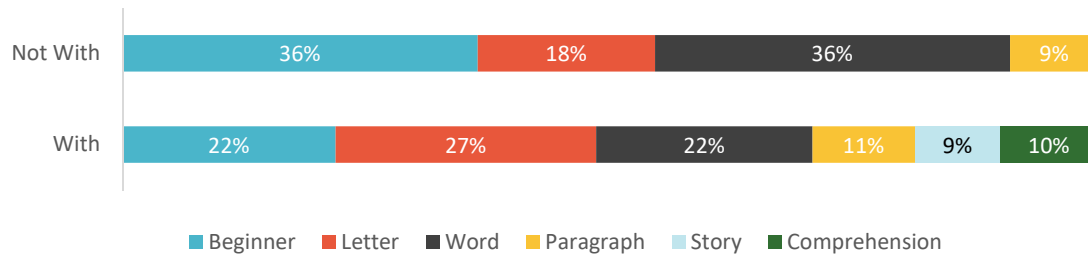
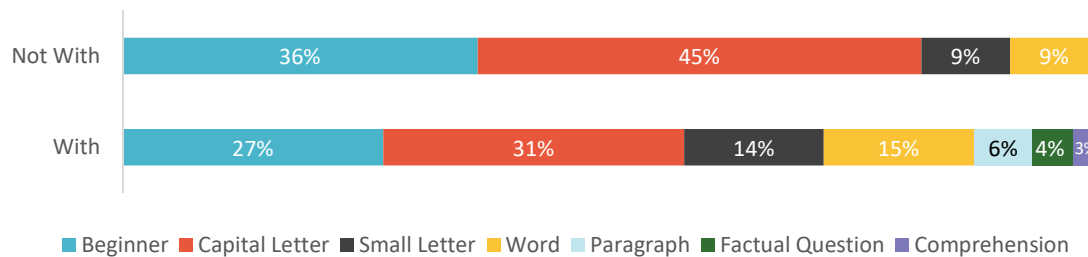


Figure 8.17 – Learning levels for English by living status – with or not with parents



Figures 8.18 and 8.19 show the results of numeracy assessments by living status of children and adolescents. As with literacy assessment results, the results show marginally improved results for participants living with parents at the most basic levels of mathematical ability, yet on the other end of the scale a higher proportion of students living with parents achieve the higher levels of attainment in mathematics.

Figure 8.18 shows results for number recognition by living status. The proportion of participants able to recognise two-digit numbers is almost half of those living with parents (48%) and 36% of those not living with parents (4 out of 11 sampled). On the other end of the scale 21% of those living with parents were unable to recognise any numbers, which rises marginally to 27% of those not living with parents (3 out of 11 sampled).

Figure 8.19 shows the results assessing the four basic mathematical operations by living status. For addition there appears to be little difference in results with 29% of participants living with parents able to do addition, compared with 27% of those not living with parents (3 out of 11 sampled). Whilst an ability to perform addition is similar by learning level, there is a stark difference in ability to perform the gradually more complex operations of subtraction, multiplication and division. Whilst 11%, 5% and 2% of participants living with parents can do subtraction, multiplication and division respectively – none of the participants not living with parents could perform these operations (0 out of 11 sampled). The results show a lower proportion of participants not living with parents, however it is difficult to infer any relationship between learning level and mathematical ability due to a high margin of error by sampling.

Figure 8.18 – Number recognition by living status – with or not with parents

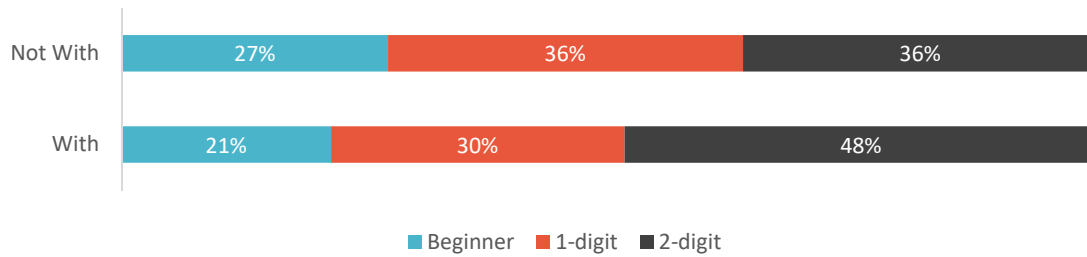
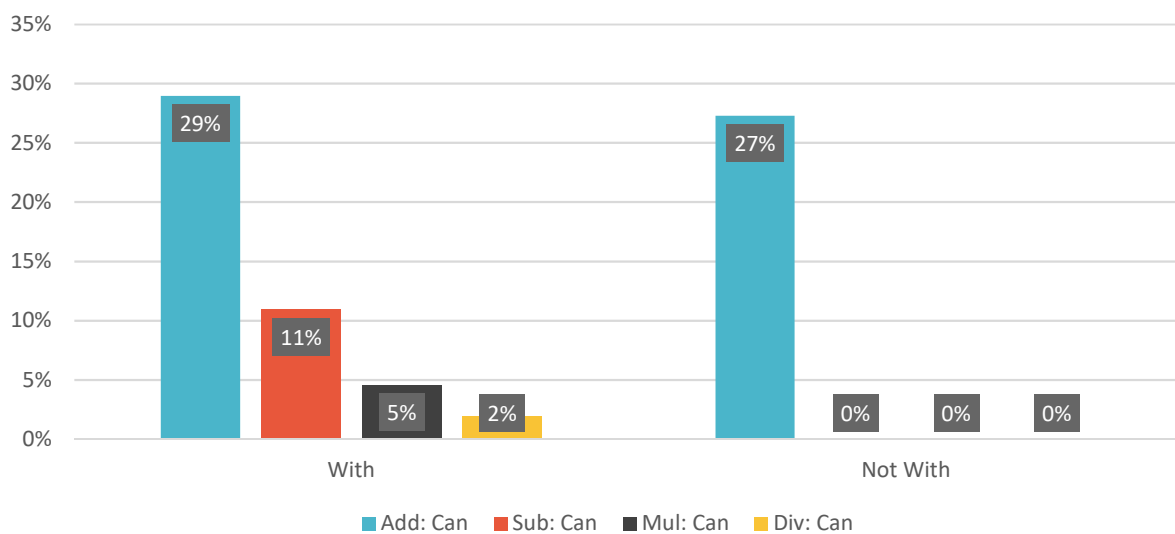


Figure 8.19 – Mathematical operations by living status – with or not with parents



PREVIOUS EDUCATION AND LEARNING LEVEL

This section examines the differences in learning level in Bengali, English and Mathematics by prior levels of education – regardless of whether respondents are in-school or out-of-school (although one must keep in mind that the vast majority sampled are presently out-of-school). The results are presented in various categories – each grade level of primary schooling (Grades 1 to 5), secondary level schooling (Grades 6 to 12)¹⁸, and those with no prior schooling. Results for the variation in learning levels by grade level reached show the strongest statistical significance across all disaggregated results.¹⁹

Figure 8.20 depicts learning levels in Bengali according to previous education levels. The graph clearly shows a strong positive correlation between grade level reached and learning outcomes in Bengali. The proportion of participants able to read a simple paragraph in Bengali is zero for those with no prior schooling and those with Grade 1 level schooling. 13% of those with schooling to Grade 2 were able to read a simple paragraph in Bengali, rising sharply to 53% of those with Grade 3 level schooling, and again to 70% with Grade 4 schooling, before

¹⁸ These grades of secondary level schooling are grouped together as one due to the low individual sample size for each grade. Only 13 of 277 participants sampled have received any secondary level schooling – just 3 of whom have surpassed Grade 8 level.

¹⁹ For aggregated results across all literacy and numeracy assessments $P=.000$ as shown in Annex B

levelling off at 74% and 79% of those with Grade 5 and Grade 6-12 schooling respectively. The same relationship is indicated for lower learning levels with a strong negative correlation between Grade level reached and a lack of the most fundamental reading skills. The proportion of participants unable to recognise words in Bengali declines from 90% of those with Grade 1 schooling, to 39% with Grade 2 schooling, 20% of those with Grade 3 schooling and 5% with Grade 4 schooling, before reducing to zero beyond Grade 5 level. Remarkably for the 50 of those with no prior schooling sampled, none of the participants could recognise letters in Bengali. Whilst the proportion of those unable to read letters and words drops to zero beyond Grade 4 level, a significant proportion of those with Grade 5 and Grade 6-12 education were unable to read simple paragraphs – 26% and 20% respectively, which is surprising considering the several years of schooling received by these particular cohorts.

Figure 8.20 – Learning levels for Bengali by previous education (grade level reached)

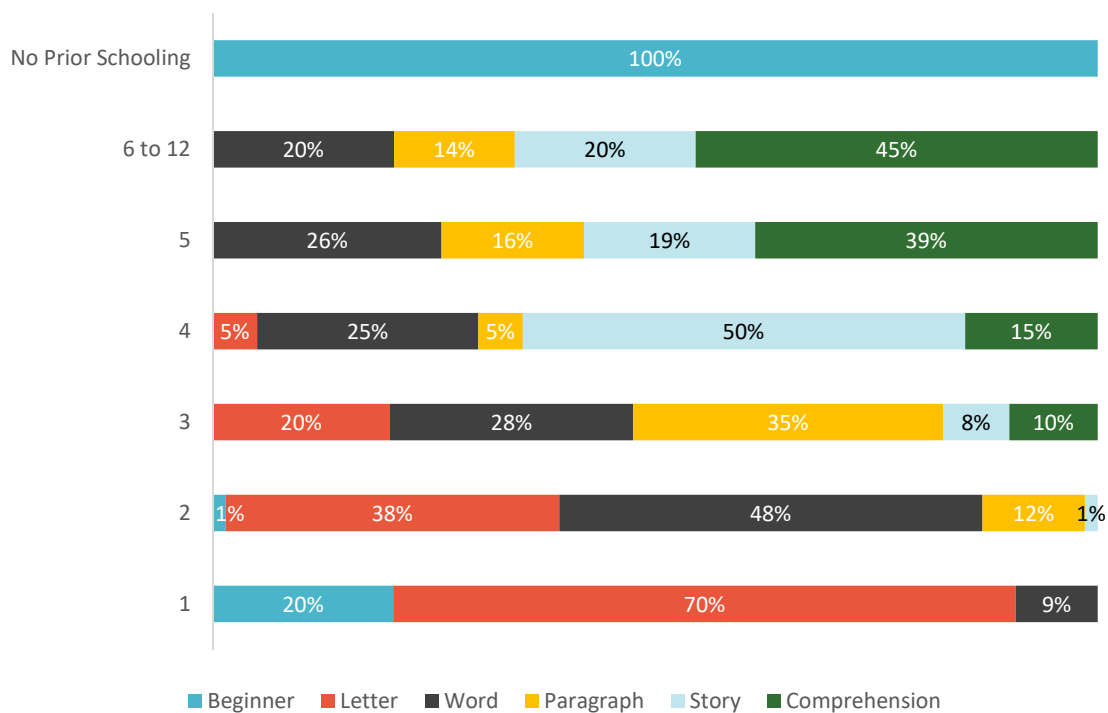
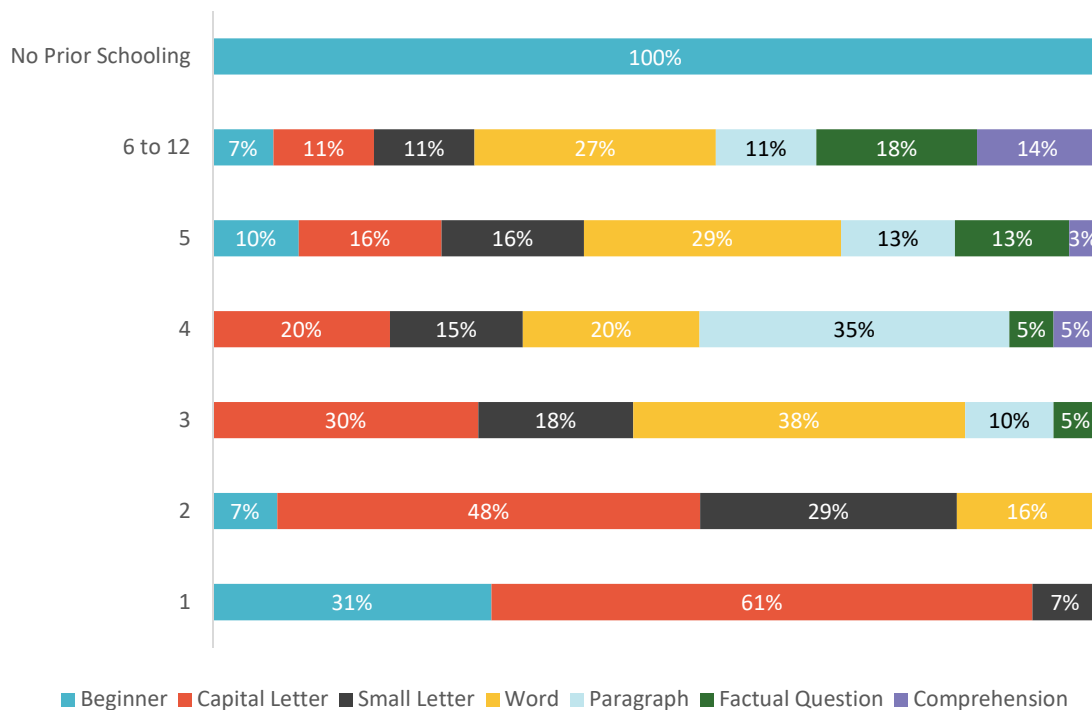


Figure 8.21 shows results for English literacy assessments according to prior education. As with Bengali reading assessments there is a clear positive correlation shown between prior schooling level and attainment in reading assessments for English. None of the participants with no prior schooling and Grade 1 schooling could recognise words in English, which rises to 16% of those with Grade 2 schooling, then rising sharply to 53% of those with Grade 3 schooling. Beyond Grade 3 it appears that improvements in English reading diminish by no clear trend of improving attainment; 65% of those with Grade 4 schooling could recognise words in English, dropping to 58% for Grade 5 level schooling, and then rising again to 60% of those with secondary level schooling (Grades 6-12). On the other end of the scale the relationship between grade level of schooling reached and learning levels is less clear for the most basic literacy skills; the proportion of those unable to recognise letters in English appears

to diminish from 31% of those with Grade 1 school, to 7% with Grade 2 schooling, and then to zero for Grades 3 and 4. The proportion of those unable to recognise letters in English however rises to 10% of those with Grade 5 schooling and 7% of those with secondary level schooling. As with Bengali results, a significant proportion of those with education beyond Grade 5 schooling lack the most basic skills in English literacy. None of the participants with no prior schooling could recognise letters in English.

Figure 8.21 – Learning levels for English by previous education (grade level reached)



Figures 8.22 and 8.23 depict results for numeracy assessments according to level of prior schooling. As with literacy assessments in Bengali and English there appears to be a generally positive correlation between prior schooling and learning level, although again this appears to level off beyond Grades 3 or 4 level.

Figure 8.22 shows the results of number recognition assessments by prior education. The proportion of participant able to recognise two-digit numbers is the lowest for those with the least schooling – zero for those with no prior schooling and 17% of those with Grade 1 level schooling. For those with Grade 2 schooling the proportion of those who can recognise two-digit numbers increases sharply to 64% of participants, to 70% then 80% for those with Grade 3 and 4 level schooling respectively before showing diminishing improvement beyond this level. The relationship between participants who couldn't recognise any numbers is less clear, with 20% of those with Grade 1 schooling unable to recognise any numbers, dropping to 1% and 3% for Grades 2 and 3 respectively, reaching a low of zero for Grade 4 schooling, and then increasing again beyond Grade 5. As with the literacy assessments, a surprisingly significant proportion of participants with schooling beyond Grade 5 level lack the most basic numeracy skills with 6% and 5% of participants with Grade 5 and Grade 6-12 schooling respectively unable

to recognise any numbers, and also 25% and 19% unable to recognise two-digit numbers. The vast majority (90%) of those with no prior schooling couldn't recognise any numbers, and none of the 50 sampled could recognise two-digit numbers.

Figure 8.23 shows the results of mathematical operations assessments by prior schooling. All participants with no prior schooling could perform any of the four basic mathematical operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Results for addition amongst participants with schooling increases sharply amongst participants with years of early schooling; 4% of those with Grade 1 schooling could do addition, rising to 22%, 55% then 65% for schooling to Grades 2, 3 and 4 respectively, before levelling off with poorer results in addition beyond Grade 5. As with literacy and number recognition assessments, a significant proportion of those with Grade 5 and 6-12 level schooling lacked the most basic skills in operations, namely the ability to add; 48% and 36% of those with Grade 5 and Grade 6-12 level schooling could not perform addition respectively. For the remaining 3 mathematical operations, participants ability to perform these appear to rise with years of schooling from zero at Grade 1 level to a height at Grade 6-12 level – in which 39%, 20% and 11% of participants with secondary level schooling able to perform subtraction, multiplication and division respectively.

Figure 8.22 – Number recognition by previous education (grade level reached)

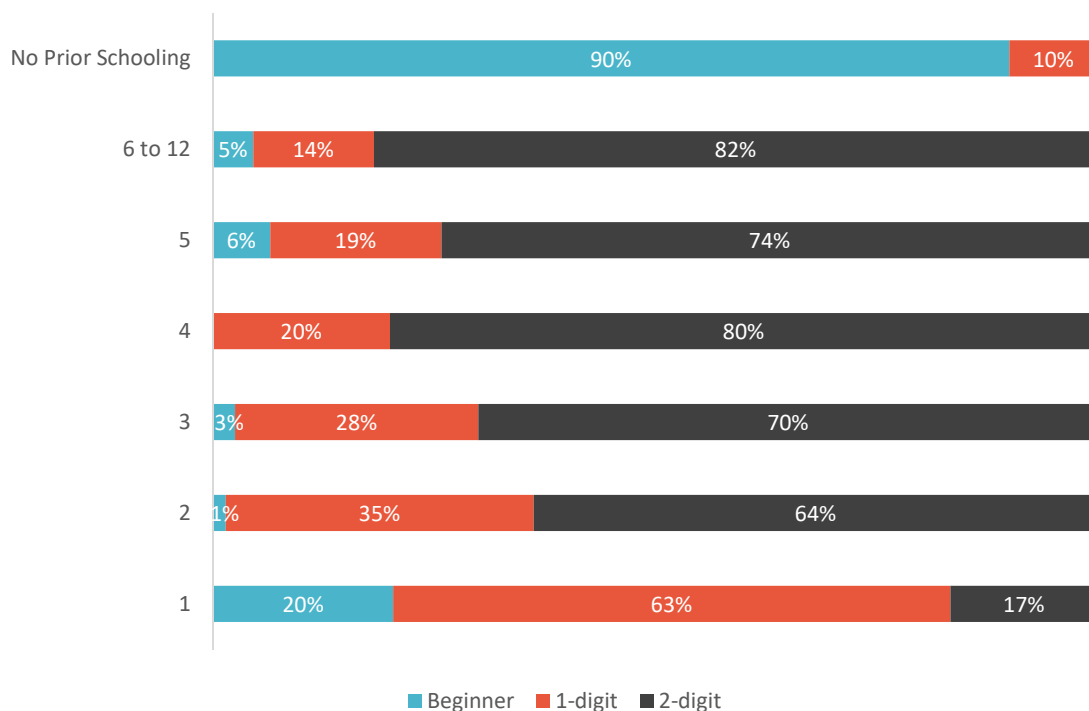
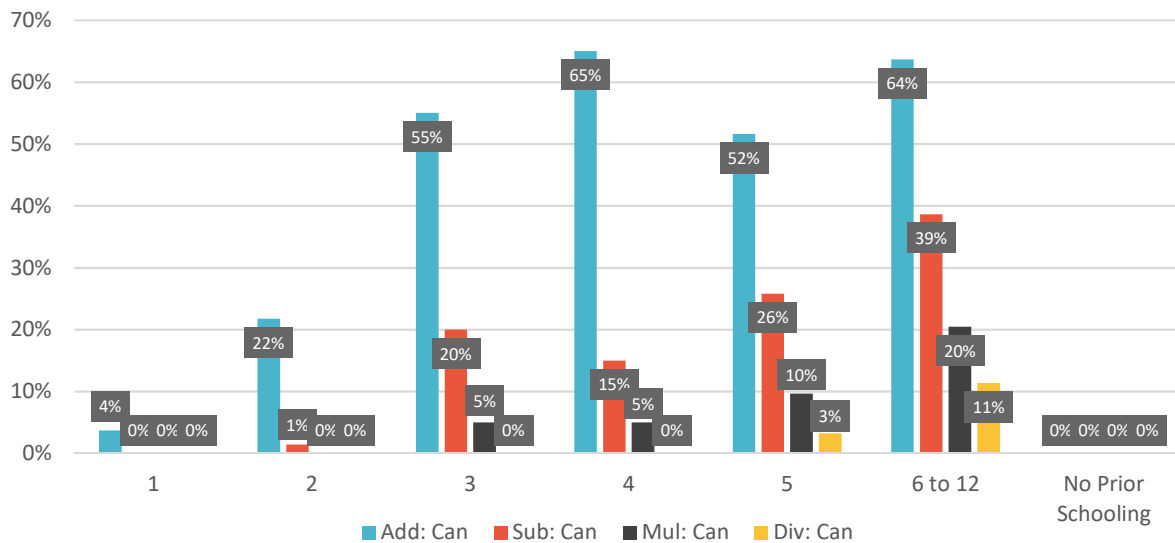


Figure 8.23 – Mathematical operations by previous education (grade level reached)



Across the results of all literacy and numeracy assessments it is shown that there is a general positive trend towards higher attainment with more years of schooling, as may be expected. These gains in learning level appear to level off – usually around the Grade 4 mark, suggesting that there could be problems with the with the quality of education in schools beyond these grades. Furthermore, there is a significant proportion of participants who have received several years of schooling who lack the most basic of literacy and numeracy skills; 19% of respondents who have been educated to secondary school level were unable to recognise 2-digit numbers, and 20% were unable to read a simple paragraph in Bengali. These results indicate that there may also be problems with the quality of learning in schools for the earlier grades of schooling. Quality of education is amongst the several issues discussed in the following section, which analyses the findings of focus group discussion on barriers to education.

8.4 BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

During the focus groups a series of questions we asked on the main barriers to education for children and adolescents from the host community. This section discusses some of the main observations, with general challenges and gendered challenges pertinent for boys and girls.

In terms of the general challenges faced by children and adolescents, there appears to be a range of accessibility issues. Firstly, there is the issue of distance; many government schools are situated far from villages in which children and adolescents live and most don't have the means of transport to go the required distance, meaning that this reduces likelihood of enrolment and retention in schools. Similarly, a USAID study found that half of all students surveyed in host communities cited transportation issues since the onset of the crisis as a barrier to accessing school stemming from less availability of public transport, high costs of

transport due to depressed wages and higher prices and increased travel time through increased road traffic – especially in Ukhia, which was singled out as being especially congested.²⁰

Secondly, there are supply-side issues for continued education – with a lack of available spaces in secondary schools to accommodate all children and adolescents. For this reason, many children are forced to drop out of education despite their will to seek further schooling. This trend is supported by evidence on the difference between the rates of out-of-school children; a multi-sectoral needs assessment found that 6% of female and 13% of male primary-school aged children are out-of-school, which rises sharply to 29% of females and 33% of males of secondary school age.²¹

Thirdly, whilst government schooling is government funded without tuition fees, families are faced with additional costs for schooling their children including the cost of uniforms and educational materials such as books and stationery. Focus group participants described how poorer families struggle to afford all the required materials, as well as examination fees that the government levy for public examinations necessary to graduate primary and secondary level education. It was mentioned that in order to alleviate the costs of schooling some poorer families receive government scholarships, however they are said to be insufficient in scale and size to offset the financial pressures of educating children – which may result in the poorest students dropping out. Focus groups also revealed that teachers in government schools offer private tuition to their students outside of school hours. Often the content of these tuition sessions includes crucial components of the curriculum – rather than supplementary material, thus creating a two-tier system in which the children of poorer families unable to afford tuition are placed at a disadvantage in which they risk falling behind and dropping out.

Related to problems of accessibility, children and adolescents feel that NGOs have done little to address the barriers to education in host communities, with all efforts regarded as going towards supporting the Rohingya despite the significant effects of the influx on highly vulnerable host communities.

Children and adolescents cite a decline in quality of education as a significant barrier. This is said to stem from teachers leaving schools serving host communities and seeking employment opportunities teaching jobs in nearby refugee camps. This trend was noted in the USAID study into the impact of the Rohingya influx on host communities, with teachers leaving schools to find employment with humanitarian organisations due to the allure of a higher salary, as well as its subsequent impact on local schools with a drain in human capacity.²² Furthermore, the study found instruction methods for teachers relied heavily on lecturing and repetition.²³ Whilst it is difficult to determine the causality, literacy and numeracy assessment results in this report support the assertion that there is an issue of education quality – with the finding that significant proportions of children and adolescents with several years of prior schooling were found to lack the most basic skills including reading a simple paragraph in Bengali or the ability to recognise two-digit numbers and perform addition.

²⁰ USAID (2018)

²¹ ISCG (2019)

²² USAID (2018)

²³ *ibid.*

Another important barrier is the general lack of awareness amongst parents to the benefits of education for children and adolescents in host communities, thus leading to less parental support. Parental support may come as a combination of: I) learning assistance; and II) encouraging learning – creating conducive conditions for study. Focus group participants stated that many parents have had no prior education themselves, which is evident as a district-wide issue with the aforementioned adult literacy rate of 39% in Cox’s Bazar and an estimated 60% of household heads in Cox’s Bazar having no education.²⁴ A lack of parental education means that they are unable to provide learning assistance critical to their children’s learning at home. A lack of parental education may also affect the degree to which learning is encouraged, and parents may even tend towards deprioritising education. Focus groups highlighted the deprioritising of female education as a particular gendered issue, with female education regarded as less important than that of males due to entrenched social norms. Furthermore, the deprioritisation of education is strongly interlinked with another issue highlighted as a barrier, that of household poverty – which often forces parents to require the support of school-aged children to provide household and income support, which in turn leads to children dropping out of education. Focus group discussions indicate that this affects both boys and girls, but in unique gendered ways – with boys required to seek employment to support household income, and girls often being required to sacrifice their education and undertake domestic work.

8.5 BARRIERS TO PROTECTION

In addition to barriers to education, focus group participants were asked what protection risks face children and adolescents in host communities, and to what extent some protection risks present further barriers to education. This section discusses some of the main observations, with general challenges and gendered challenges pertinent for boys and girls.

Focus group participants described protection risks faced by boys and girls, which often impact the mobility of children and adolescents in host communities, especially after dark. Human trafficking is prevalent across Bangladesh, which often occurs as a result of abuse of trust or kidnapping. As border district, Cox’s Bazar is particularly affected by human trafficking – in 2018 it was reported that 21% of host communities reported that people unknown to the community had offered to take their children away for different reasons – employment or improved care.²⁵

There are a number of protection risks that pose threats to boys in host communities. As mentioned in the prior section, boys may have to forfeit their education in order to seek work opportunities to contribute to household income. Cox’s Bazar district has amongst the highest rates of child labour in the country, with Teknaf and Ukhiya upazilas having the highest rate of 10-14 year old children in the workforce, 7-9% and 9%+ respectively.²⁶ Boys are

²⁴ Food Security Cluster (2018)

²⁵ Acaps (2018)

²⁶ USAID (2018)

frequently subjected to hazardous forms of child labour such as construction work, wood collection, and service work in shops and hotels.

Whilst not a unique, boys are said to be at a greater risk of involvement in the illicit drug trade, either as end-users who abuse harmful substances or through involvement in the trafficking of drugs. A USAID study into host communities in Cox's Bazar cites commonly used drugs as phensedyl, heroin, marijuana, and 'yaba' (methamphetamine).²⁷

In terms of protection risks pertinent to girls, female participants in focus groups expressed concern over childhood marriage, and early and unwanted pregnancies. Bangladesh has the 4th highest rate of child marriage in the world – with 22% of girls married before the age of 15 and 59% before the age of 18.²⁸ A number of factors are interrelated with early marriage of girls, including household poverty, social norms and traditions, however education is found to be a significant determinant of the age in which females marry; the median age of girls with no education in Bangladesh to marry is 15 years, but for girls who have completed secondary school the median age of marriage rises to 20 years.²⁹ Whilst the causality of this relationship could be deemed unclear, evidence suggests that teaching girls about their rights and building skills for modern livelihoods may reduce the likelihood of child marriage by up to one third in Bangladesh.³⁰ At a more local level, rises in child marriage found in host communities of Cox's Bazar have been attributed to the increased strain on the local economy caused by the Rohingya influx, with child marriage being a negative coping strategy used by families with heightened insecurity.³¹

Focus group participants described how girls and young women are susceptible to multiple forms of sexual and gender-based violence and harassment inside and outside of the home. Domestic violence in the household is found to be highly prevalent in Bangladesh; on a national level one in five adolescents girls aged 15-18 report experiencing sexual violence from their partner³², and seven out of ten women have experienced domestic violence at least once in their life.³³ Most cases of domestic violence in host communities in Cox's Bazar are found to be dowry-related,³⁴ which stems from disputes over dowry payments between families. Common forms of dowry-related violence are physical violence, marital rape, acid attacks and in some cases murder.³⁵ Outside of the household girls described the prevalence of 'eve teasing' – a term to describe the making of unwanted sexual remarks or advances by a man to a woman in a public place. This can provide additional barriers to accessing education for girls, resulting in reduced attendance and drop outs. A USAID host community study found that, whilst safety in-school and travelling to and from school was found to be a concern for boys and girls alike, twice as many girls reported being harassed by strangers on the road or in their school.³⁶

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *Girls Not Brides (2019)*

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *Acaps (2018)*

³² *UNICEF (2014)*

³³ *Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2015)*

³⁴ *USAID (2018)*

³⁵ *Stop VAW (2019)*

³⁶ *USAID (2018)*

Children and adolescents expressed two main barriers to accessing support services that might mitigate and respond to protection risks. Firstly, children and adolescents expressed the issue of a lack of provision in protection services from the duty bearers in society, namely that of government services. In the absence of government protection service support, respondents lament the insufficient support services offered by NGOs –deemed to be overly occupied with providing services and support to displaced Rohingya.

In the second instance, there is a reluctance to seek support from law enforcement amongst children and adolescents when at risk or subject to harm. This is reported by respondents to be due to a lack of knowledge on how to access such services, as well as a reluctance to seek support due to pressure in society not to openly discuss taboo subject. Private forms of violence including those that are domestic and dowry-related are largely taboo and therefore women often suffer in silence; despite the high prevalence of partner violence, only 2.6% of women in Bangladesh who experience partner physical or sexual violence take legal action.³⁷

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings in this report intend address the lack of accumulated knowledge on learning levels amongst children and adolescents in host communities, especially for the significant proportion who are presently out of school. Whilst the scale and scope of this study by no means entirely fills the knowledge gap on host community education, it does provide an indicative insight into the present learning levels of children and adolescents in host communities, how such learning levels vary by present education status, gender, age and background, as well as some of the main barriers to education and protection faced by children and adolescents in host communities.

Literacy and numeracy assessments at large show a deficit in foundational literacy and numeracy skills amongst children and adolescents in host communities. In Bengali literacy, assessment results show that 22% of participating children and adolescents cannot read a letter in Bengali, 48% cannot read a word, and 71% cannot read a simple paragraph. In English literacy, assessment result show that 27% of participating children and adolescents cannot read a letter in English, 72% cannot read a word and 87% cannot read a simple paragraph. In numeracy assessments 52% of participating children and adolescents were unable to recognise two-digits numbers and 22% could not recognise one-digit numbers. Furthermore, 71% of participating children and adolescents could not do addition, 90% could not do subtraction, 96% could not do multiplication and 98% could not do division.

As may be expected, results show a clear gap in learning levels between in-school and out-of-school children and adolescents in host communities. For example, half of in-school participants were able to read a simple paragraph in Bengali, compared to three quarters of

³⁷ National VAWG Survey (2015)

out-of-school participants. The attainment gap is less stark for number recognition, however was clearer for mathematical operations.

An analysis of learning levels in Bengali, English and Mathematics broadly revealed little difference in learning level between male and female respondents. In Bengali, females are shown to have slightly higher levels of attainment. There was little discernible difference in English learning levels, number recognition and mathematical operations.

Literacy and numeracy assessments show a broadly positive correlation of learning level and age in all Bengali, English and Mathematics assessments. The contrast between learning levels for the youngest age group of 6-10 and middle age group of 11-13 is the starkest, however improvements in learning level are shown to level off in all assessments between the middle and eldest age group of 14-18.

Results show a clear difference in literacy attainment in Bengali and English between participant who live with parents and those who do not – with higher attainment for living with parents, and somewhat improved, but far less significant results that show improved results in numeracy assessments. Analysis of the relationship between living status and learning levels is however severely constrained due to a high margin of error deriving from the small sample of participants not living with parents.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the factor that correlated strongest with learning level in literacy and numeracy assessments was years of prior schooling. Bengali, English and mathematical assessments in number recognition and operations show a clear positive correlation between the number of years of schooling received and attainment, albeit with diminishing improvement from around the Grade 4 level. Results in all assessments between Grades 4, 5 and 6-12 appear more sporadic, suggesting a possible deficiency in quality of schooling at these Grade levels. Furthermore, for students in such groups with several years of school completed – a surprising proportion lack the most basic skills; 19% of respondents who have been educated to secondary school level were unable to recognise 2-digit numbers, and 20% were unable to read a simple paragraph in Bengali. These results indicate that there may be issues in quality of schooling, an issue which was brought to light in focus groups amongst other barriers to education.

Focus group discussions revealed barriers to education, many of which have been intensified since the onset of the crisis. Such barriers prevent accessibility – including transport issues such as distance and commuting time, supply-side issues of limited spaces in secondary schools, additional cost of education through material and examination costs and private tuition creating a two-tier system within classrooms, and a lack of provision of services from NGOs to alleviate challenges of accessing education in host communities. Problems of education quality in schools, which literacy and numeracy assessment results indicated towards, appear to derive from trained teachers departing schools in host communities and seeking employment opportunities with humanitarian organisations working in camps. Respondents cited a lack of awareness to the importance of education amongst parents as a constraint on accessibility with the deprioritisation of education amongst parents combined with household poverty leading to many boys dropping out and seeking employment and girls dropping out to engage in domestic labour. Poor awareness of education amongst, often stemming from no prior schooling received by parents, also prevents a home environment supportive and conducive to learning for children in school.

Children and adolescents participating in focus groups cited a number of protection risks – including human trafficking, drug abuse and trafficking, child labour and sexual and gender-based violence. Many of these risks interrelate with and present further barriers to education. Boys who were forced to drop out of education to provide income support for their families often find themselves involved in hazardous forms of child labour. Child marriage and unwanted pregnancy often results in girls dropping out of education prematurely, but also reverse causality in means that female education can reduce child marriage, early and unwanted pregnancy. The threat of eve teasing and other forms of sexual harassment and abuse in schools and on the commute to schools contributes towards increased absence and dropouts of female students. Generally focus group participants cited a lack of access to protective services deriving from a lack of available services offered by government and NGOs, as well as a reluctance to seek support when at risk of or subject to harm due to a lack of knowledge of how to access support, as well as a reluctance to discuss matters widely considered taboo.

9.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

- **Further research on barriers to education in host communities in Cox's Bazar**
This report intends to provide a snapshot into learning levels of children and adolescents in host communities. There is a need for further research of greater scope and scale across Cox's Bazar district to provide insights into present learning levels and barriers to education. Whilst this report focuses on out-of-school children and adolescents, future research should take a deeper look into the learning levels of in-school students
- **Support out-of-school children and adolescents into formal education**
This can be achieved through accelerated learning interventions that prioritise building foundational skills in reading and arithmetic to achieve increased enrolment and (re)integration into formal education
- **Support children and adolescent vulnerable to dropping out to remain in school by building foundational literacy and numeracy skills**
This can be achieved through accelerated learning interventions that prioritise building foundational skills in reading and arithmetic to achieve increased retention of students in schools

- **Integrate protection services with education programming for children and adolescents in host communities**

Protection risks are shown to be interwoven with barriers to education, and focus groups reveal a lack of protection support for host communities at present. Education programming should therefore integrate protection offering referral systems and building supportive networks for children and adolescents from host communities.

Those most prone to protection risks such as girls vulnerable early marriage and pregnancy and sexual and gender-based violence, and boys vulnerable to child labour should be prioritised



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ANNEX A CONTINGENCY TABLE FOR LITERACY AND NUMERACY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Subject	Assessment	Total	All	Gender		Education Status		Living Status		Age			Grade								No Prior Schooling			
			Male	Female	In School	Out-of-School	With	Not With	6-10	11-13	14-18	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10		12		
			277	123	154	39	238	266	11	80	61	136	54	69	40	20	31	4	3	3	2	1	50	
Bengali	Beginner	62	22%	24%	21%	5%	25%	22%	36%	51%	8%	12%	20%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
	Letter	73	26%	31%	23%	31%	26%	27%	18%	29%	28%	24%	70%	38%	20%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Word	63	23%	23%	23%	15%	24%	22%	36%	10%	33%	26%	9%	48%	28%	25%	26%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Paragraph	29	10%	7%	13%	10%	11%	11%	9%	8%	15%	10%	0%	12%	35%	5%	16%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Story	23	8%	6%	10%	5%	9%	9%	0%	0%	8%	13%	0%	1%	8%	50%	19%	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Comprehension	27	10%	9%	10%	33%	6%	10%	0%	3%	8%	15%	0%	0%	10%	15%	39%	50%	67%	33%	100%	100%	0%	0%
English	Beginner	75	27%	27%	27%	10%	30%	27%	36%	60%	10%	15%	31%	7%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
	Capital Letter	87	31%	34%	29%	28%	32%	31%	45%	21%	36%	35%	61%	48%	30%	20%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Small Letter	39	14%	13%	15%	18%	13%	14%	9%	9%	18%	15%	7%	29%	18%	15%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Word	42	15%	14%	16%	15%	15%	15%	9%	9%	23%	15%	0%	16%	38%	20%	29%	50%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Paragraph	16	6%	5%	6%	3%	6%	6%	0%	0%	10%	7%	0%	0%	10%	35%	13%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Factual Question	11	4%	5%	3%	15%	2%	4%	0%	1%	3%	6%	0%	0%	5%	5%	13%	50%	0%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Comprehension	7	3%	2%	3%	10%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	5%	3%	0%	67%	0%	100%	100%	0%	0%
Maths: Number recognition	Beginner	60	22%	22%	21%	10%	24%	21%	27%	49%	5%	13%	20%	1%	3%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	90%
	1-digit	84	30%	31%	30%	31%	30%	30%	36%	33%	33%	28%	63%	35%	28%	20%	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%
	2-digit	133	48%	47%	49%	59%	46%	48%	36%	19%	62%	59%	17%	64%	70%	80%	74%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Maths: Addition	Add: Can	80	29%	28%	30%	49%	26%	29%	27%	10%	43%	34%	4%	22%	55%	65%	52%	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
	Add: Can't	197	71%	72%	70%	51%	74%	71%	73%	90%	57%	66%	96%	78%	45%	35%	48%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Maths: Subtraction	Sub: Can	29	10%	10%	11%	31%	7%	11%	0%	4%	7%	16%	0%	1%	20%	15%	26%	50%	67%	67%	100%	100%	0%	0%
	Sub: Can't	248	90%	90%	89%	69%	93%	89%	100%	96%	93%	84%	100%	99%	80%	85%	74%	50%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Maths: Multiplication	Mul: Can	12	4%	4%	5%	15%	3%	5%	0%	0%	3%	7%	0%	0%	5%	5%	10%	25%	67%	33%	50%	100%	0%	0%
	Mul: Can't	265	96%	96%	95%	85%	97%	95%	100%	100%	97%	93%	100%	100%	95%	95%	90%	75%	33%	67%	50%	0%	0%	100%
Maths: Division	Div: Can	5	2%	2%	2%	8%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	67%	0%	50%	100%	0%	0%
	Div: Can't	272	98%	98%	98%	92%	99%	98%	100%	100%	100%	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	97%	100%	33%	100%	50%	0%	0%	100%

ANNEX B REGRESSION TABLE

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	P-Value	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	P-Value
Aggregated Results	Age	0.001**	Division	Age	0.780
Aggregated Results	Currently in School	0.006**	Division	Currently in School	0.422
Aggregated Results	Gender	0.006**	Division	Gender	0.219
Aggregated Results	Grade Level	0.000***	Division	Grade Level	0.000***
Aggregated Results	Living with Parents	0.401	Division	Living with Parents	0.707
Aggregated Results	Upazila	0.000***	Division	Upazila	0.001**
Addition	Age	0.874	Digit Recognition	Age	0.004**
Addition	Currently in School	0.296	Digit Recognition	Currently in School	0.269
Addition	Gender	0.103	Digit Recognition	Gender	0.050
Addition	Grade Level	0.000***	Digit Recognition	Grade Level	0.000***
Addition	Living with Parents	0.476	Digit Recognition	Living with Parents	0.580
Addition	Upazila	0.329	Digit Recognition	Upazila	0.825
Subtraction	Age	0.160	English	Age	0.007**
Subtraction	Currently in School	0.011*	English	Currently in School	0.024
Subtraction	Gender	0.182	English	Gender	0.001**
Subtraction	Grade Level	0.000***	English	Grade Level	0.000***
Subtraction	Living with Parents	0.741	English	Living with Parents	0.289
Subtraction	Upazila	0.001**	English	Upazila	0.000***
Multiplication	Age	0.453	Bengali	Age	0.000***
Multiplication	Currently in School	0.060	Bengali	Currently in School	0.009**
Multiplication	Gender	0.239	Bengali	Gender	0.235
Multiplication	Grade Level	0.000***	Bengali	Grade Level	0.000***
Multiplication	Living with Parents	0.989	Bengali	Living with Parents	0.433
Multiplication	Upazila	0.017*	Bengali	Upazila	0.000***

* p < 0.05
 ** p < 0.01
 *** p < 0.001