

# Schooling of 2.5 lakh Rohingya children stops

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UNICEF, Save the Children close all learning centres amid fund crunch



In this representational image, Rohingya children stand in a queue at a registration camp in Cox's Bazar. Photo: Reuters/File

Education activities in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar have been suspended amid funding shortage, putting the education of around 2.5 lakh children at risk.

UNICEF Cox's Bazar Chief of Field Office Angela Kearney and Save the Children Director Golam Mostofa yesterday wrote to the office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) in Cox's Bazar.

"The education sector in Cox's Bazar would like to inform you that due to unavoidable circumstances, the sector is in agreement with the suggestion to close the learning facilities in the camps with immediate effect," the letter says.

Operations of the learning centres in the camps will remain closed until further notice, it said.

The development comes after hundreds of teachers from the host community blocked Cox's Bazar-Teknaf road for hours yesterday, protesting termination of contracts of their jobs.

Protesters said only host community teachers were terminated, while Rohingya teachers continue in their roles. They warned that the move would disproportionately affect the already vulnerable host communities.

They have been demonstrating after the UNICEF on May 27 issued a notice saying that immediately all host community volunteer teachers working in Kindergarten Grade-1 and Grade-2 are to have their volunteer contracts ended.

The notice added that there will be further reductions in the number of host community teaching volunteers for grades 3-5.

RRRC Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday that the blockade by the host community teachers cut off the road communications with the Rohingya camps.

Yesterday, the RRRC and the education sector representatives held a meeting. Later, the joint letter was issued by UNICEF and Save the Children to the RRRC, announcing the closure of learning centres in the camps.

There are around 4,000 learning centres in the camps where around 1.2 million Rohingyas have been sheltered, most of them since 2017 when they fled a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

An estimated 1,50,000 new Rohingyas have arrived in Bangladesh in the recent months and 50,000 more are expected to join them by this year end, putting further strains on Bangladesh.

The Rohingyas continue to flee the Rakhine state of Myanmar due to escalating violence, said the UN World Food Programme in its country brief published on May 19.

In contrast, the funding for the refugees witnesses a decline.

The total humanitarian needs of the Rohingyas in 2025 have been estimated at \$934 million, but so far only 20 percent or \$180 million have been met.