

Mixed-methods assessment of the Girl Rising intervention with Rohingya refugee communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

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Executive summary

Background

In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, adolescent girls are among those most affected by the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis, facing intersecting barriers to education, agency, mobility, and well-being. In the refugee camps, already limited access to education is further constrained for Rohingya adolescent girls by deeply entrenched gender norms and attitudes, resulting in profound gender disparities. To address these challenges, Girl Rising, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and local education partners implemented a pilot programme among 500 Rohingya adolescent girls (aged 10–19 years) and their female and male caregivers. Through storytelling and facilitated discussion, the programme aimed to strengthen girls' school engagement, voice and agency, and future aspirations, while also encouraging caregivers

to reflect on restrictive gender norms and better support girls' education.

Girl Rising is a global campaign that uses storytelling to engage adolescent girls and their communities in conversations around social norms change. Evidence from Girl Rising's gender-sensitisation programmes has shown shifts towards more progressive gender attitudes and norms (Vyas et al., 2020). The Girl Rising curriculum implemented in Cox's Bazar comprised 12 modules for adolescent girls and 6 modules for caregivers, with sessions held daily over a two-week period. Modules focused on the stories of four girls who face barriers to education and overcome these challenges with support from their families and communities. Programming was adapted to include a story about a girl living in a refugee camp, and to be delivered in a compressed timeframe (two weeks rather than over several months, e.g., Vyas et al (2020)).



A Rohingya girl in class, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

Methods

This report presents findings from a mixed-methods evaluation of the Girl Rising pilot programme in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, conducted by the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) consortium. Baseline quantitative surveys were conducted from August to September 2025, with 503 adolescent girls and 464 female primary caregivers, and endline surveys were conducted in December 2025 with a panel sample of 501 adolescent girls and 461 female primary caregivers. Qualitative in-depth-interviews were conducted among a purposively selected subset of the quantitative sample – 16 adolescent girls and 10 female and male caregivers at baseline, and 15 adolescent girls, 8 female and male caregivers and 4 programme staff at endline.

Key findings

The findings indicate positive short-term improvements in girls' voice, aspirations, and communication with mothers and fathers following participation in the Girl Rising programme.

Girls and caregivers reported overwhelmingly positive experiences with the Girl Rising programme – most participants found the sessions engaging, inspiring and educational. Nearly all of the adolescent girls reported that the programme helped them think about their goals and ways to discuss issues they face with their families. However, some girls (20%) reported that the stories made them feel discouraged about their future, and even more mothers (30%) reported feeling discouraged about their daughters' futures.

Quantitative results show notable improvements in girls' ability to express themselves and discuss their futures. The share of girls who felt comfortable expressing an opinion to elders increased from 56% at baseline to 69% at follow-up, and the proportion who felt comfortable discussing their dreams with parents (particularly with the father) increased sharply (from 47% to 78%). Additionally, the proportion of girls aspiring to at least some university education increased from 9% to 24%, while those reporting having an education-related goal for the next year increased from 71% to 96%.

Qualitative data reinforces these findings. Girls described feeling more confident and more motivated to continue their education. Girls connected with the stories, especially the story of Ruksana, which resonated because

of its message of perseverance and parental support. Conversely, Amina's story evoked negative reactions among some participants due to themes of child marriage and forced labour.

Findings also demonstrate encouraging shifts among female caregivers. The age at which female caregivers expect girls to leave education and marry increased slightly, as did supportive practices at home, including providing lighting and study space for girls. Female caregivers also shifted their attitudes towards gender equity, particularly regarding whether girls' education should be prioritised over household work.

There were, however, some study limitations which should be considered when interpreting the findings. Although changes were observed in communication, aspirations and attitudes, mobility and broader socio-emotional indicators remained unchanged. Deeply entrenched social norms continue to create barriers for girls and caregivers. Moreover, married girls and girls in households with gender norms that restrict mobility were less able to participate fully in the programme, and some female caregivers reported that mixed-gender sessions limited their comfort and engagement.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the findings indicate encouraging short-term improvements in girls' voice and aspirations, and family support. However, to further leverage the effects of the programme and promote sustainable change, we recommend the following adaptations: (1) hold separate sessions for female and male caregivers to improve participation and foster discussion; (2) implement sessions for adolescent boys, who play a key role in shaping and reinforcing gender norms; (3) integrate the programme elements into the Myanmar curriculum to support scale up and sustainability; (4) adapt all the stories to the Rohingya context to ensure all materials resonate with Rohingya adolescents and caregivers; (4) conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the longer-term effects of the programme with a design that allow for testing varied programme dosage and intensity ; and (5) continue to build on the pedagogical approach for facilitators that participants highly valued whilst providing them with tools to navigate potential community backlash against gender norm change efforts.

Introduction

The Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, remains one of the most protracted and complex humanitarian emergencies in the world. More than 1 million Rohingya refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18, live in overcrowded, hazard-prone camps where daily life is shaped by displacement, poverty, restrictive gender norms, and limited opportunities for education and social mobility (ISCG, 2025; UNHCR, 2025a; UNICEF, 2025). Among those most affected are adolescent girls (aged 10–19), who face intersecting barriers that diminish their access to learning, constrain their agency, and expose them to increased risks of child marriage, gender-based violence, and poor health outcomes (Guglielmi et al., 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d; ISCG, 2025).

In this context, strengthening adolescent girls’ voice, agency, and their access to education, is essential, not only for their individual well-being but also for the resilience and long-term development of the Rohingya community. Adolescence is a critical period when gender attitudes and perceptions of gender norms are shaped (GAGE consortium, 2019). During these formative years, young people actively construct their understanding of what it means to be a boy or a girl, and their views remain highly malleable (Blum et al., 2017). By intentionally addressing gender equality and surfacing the impacts of gender discrimination, programming for adolescents can influence attitudes and behaviours in the short term as well as the longer term, laying the foundations for more equitable gender norms and behaviours across the community (Yu et al., 2017).



Students in class, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

Background

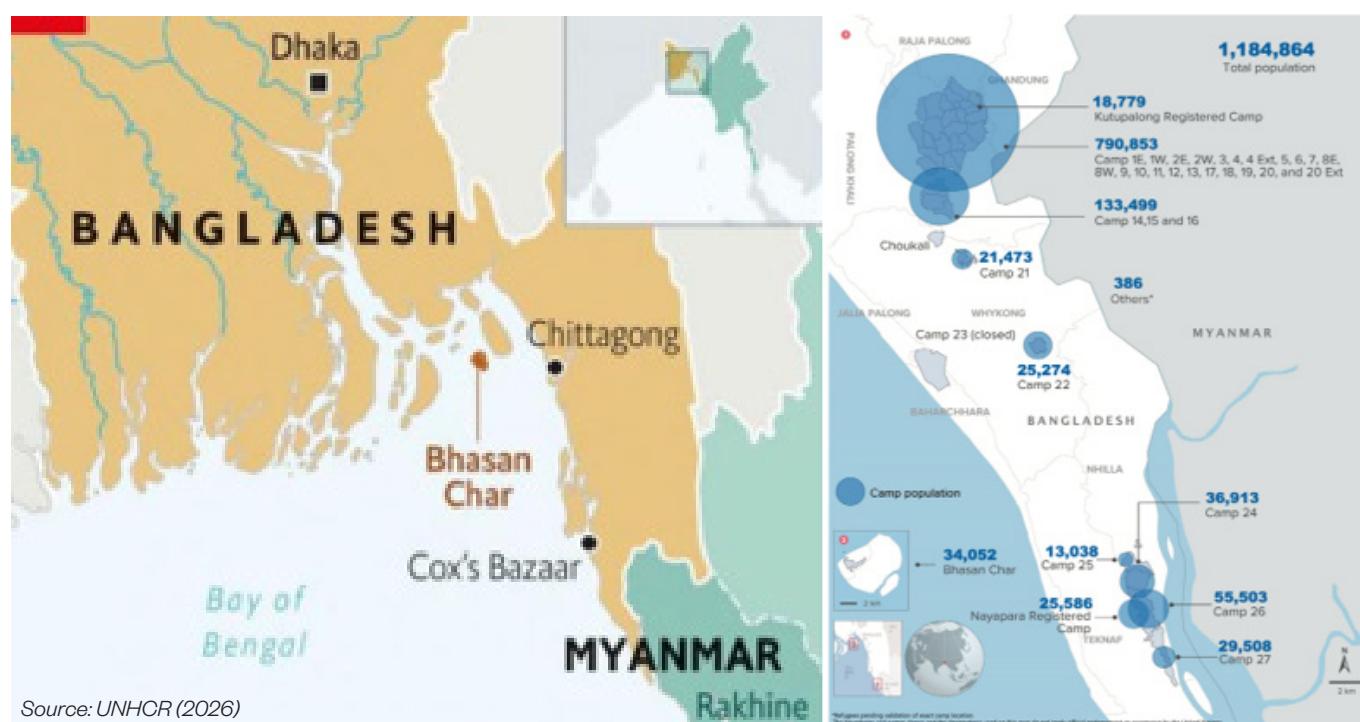
Cox's Bazar, in south-eastern Bangladesh, is known for its 120-kilometre shoreline – the longest uninterrupted beach in the world (see Figure 1 for the study area). However, that beauty stands in sharp contrast to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the district. Today, more than 1.1 million Rohingya – who in 2017 fled ethnic and religious persecution and systematic violence in Rakhine State in Myanmar – live in 34 congested camps across Cox's Bazar District and Bhasan Char Island, constituting the largest refugee settlement in the world (UNHCR, 2025b). The overcrowded settlement in Cox's Bazar began as temporary bamboo and tarpaulin shelters in 2017. It has since become a hazard-prone settlement area shaped by repeated waves of displacement (UN News, 2025).

Refugees in these camps depend almost entirely on aid, which often falls short of meeting their immediate relief and longer-term development needs. By mid-2025, only 35% of the \$934.5 million Joint Response Plan had been funded, deepening food insecurity, malnutrition, disease outbreaks, and risks such as trafficking and gender-based violence (ISCG, 2025). More than half of the Rohingya refugees are aged under 18, with more than 400,000 school-aged children, yet access to education remains severely limited, particularly for adolescent girls (UNICEF, 2025).

Rohingya adolescent girls living in these refugee camps face profound barriers to education shaped by deeply entrenched socio-cultural values, conservative gender norms within their community, and the attitudes of parents and caregivers who often have no formal schooling themselves. These factors contribute to low enrolment, irregular attendance, and high dropout rates among girls, resulting in stark gender disparities in access to learning (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2024a). Many parents do not see any value in educating daughters; in addition, poverty, child marriage and limited household incomes further exacerbate poor mental health outcomes for adolescent girls and increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence (ibid.).

In the 2022–2023 academic year, the first end-of-year assessments using the Myanmar curriculum were conducted in May 2023 for grades 6–9 in Cox's Bazar and grades 3 and 6 in Bhasan Char. Of the 9,464 learners assessed, only 1,516 were girls. Results showed that more than 60% of students achieved expected proficiency in the Burmese language, whereas just over one-third reached expected levels in mathematics; notably, girls consistently underperformed compared with boys – a gap partly attributed to absenteeism during menstruation (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2024b).

Figure 1: Study area



An Out-of-School Girls Survey conducted in April 2024 by UNICEF with adolescent girls aged 11–18 revealed the primary reasons why they were not attending learning facilities: 33% felt they were too old to study; 24% reported a lack of interest in learning; 23% cited heavy household responsibilities; 19% noted the absence of female teachers or volunteers as a deterrent; and 16% said their parents or caregivers did not support their education (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2024a).

The purdah system deeply shapes these realities by limiting girls' movement, prohibiting unaccompanied travel, and mandating segregation from boys, particularly during menstruation (Samuri and Hopkins, 2023). These norms both reflect and reinforce the critical shortage of qualified Rohingya female teachers – a gap that further erodes girls' motivation, their sense of belonging in learning spaces, and their belief in the value of an education. Without access to secondary education, these girls face restricted future incomes, increased household stress, poorer health outcomes, elevated risk of gender-based violence, and higher rates of child and forced marriage followed by early pregnancy (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2024a).

To counter these challenges, UNICEF has introduced separate classes for adolescent girls, and recruited Rohingya women as Girls' Education Volunteers to escort girls to and from learning centres and to remain present during classes – measures that have improved engagement yet have not fully closed persistent gender gaps (ibid.). Building on this foundation, UNICEF is now supporting Girl Rising (see below) to deliver a pilot programme targeting 500 adolescent girls and their caregivers. The initiative seeks to boost girls' school attendance, strengthen their voice, agency, and self-esteem, and engage parents in understanding restrictive gender norms and creating more supportive home learning environments.

Girl Rising

Girl Rising is a global campaign that inspires social action through powerful storytelling and partnerships. It uses media tools and stories to engage adolescent girls and their communities in conversations around social norms change, aiming to shift norms and beliefs around women and girls, inspire people to adopt new ideas and practices, and ultimately change behaviours. Girl Rising delivers its educational programming and teacher training in 15 countries (Argentina, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana,

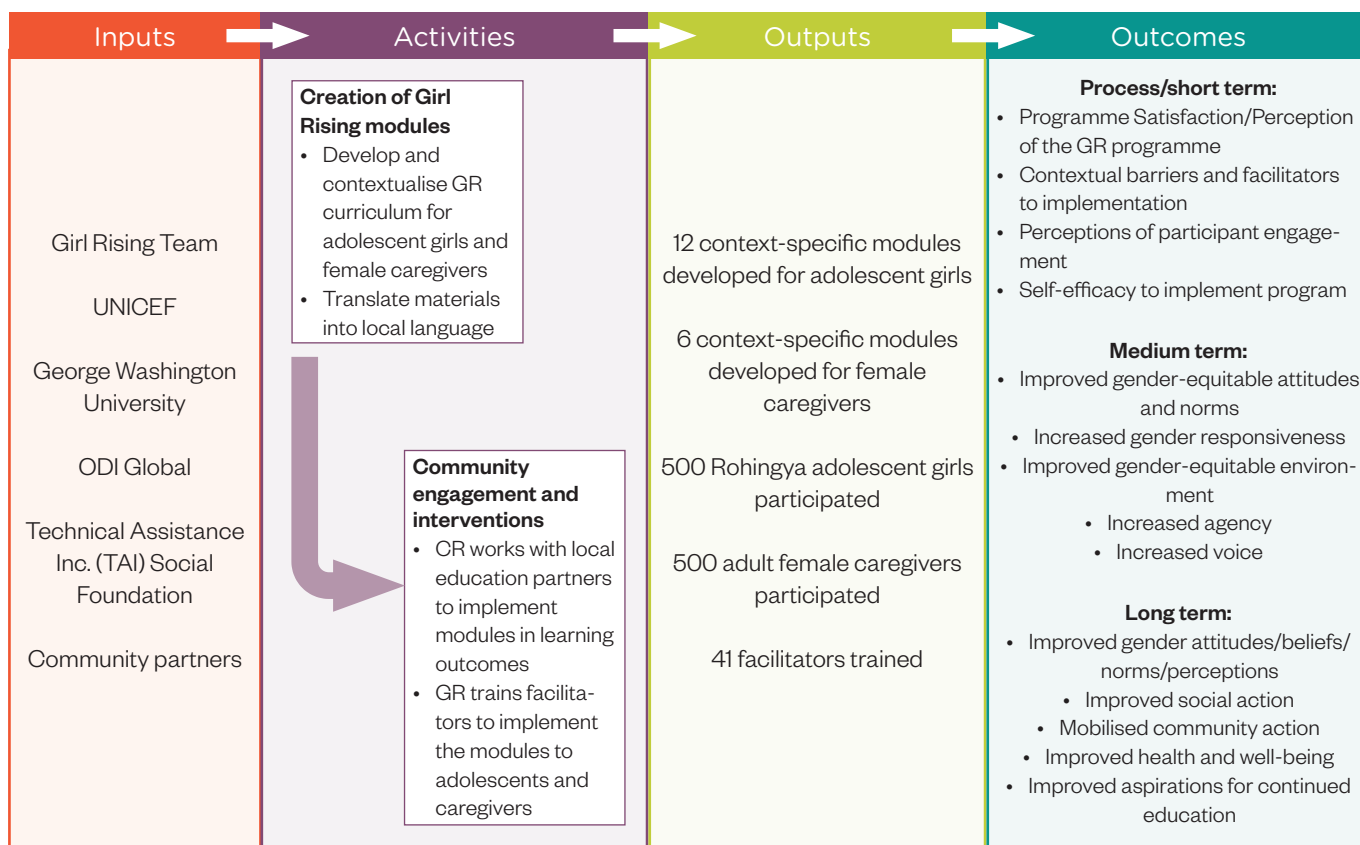
Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam) and has now expanded into Cox's Bazar.

Evidence from Girl Rising's gender-sensitisation programmes across these countries has shown positive changes for adolescent boys and girls, including more progressive gender attitudes and perceptions of gender norms, and higher levels of individual agency. Specifically, adolescents were more likely to report more equitable attitudes for gender roles, privileges and restrictions, gender attitudes, and gender violence (Vyas et al., 2020; Kartha et al., 2025; Nagaraj et al., 2025).

In Cox's Bazar, Girl Rising, with support from UNICEF, implemented a pilot programme to deliver gender-transformative programming designed specifically for Rohingya adolescent girls and their caregivers. UNICEF selected partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that were operating learning centres in the camps to implement the Girl Rising programme. These partners included Mukti, BRAC, Friendship, COAST Foundation, Jagorani Chakra Foundation (JCF), and the Community Development Centre (CODEO).

Figure 2 outlines the Girl Rising pilot programme in Cox's Bazar, and its key activities, outputs and anticipated outcomes. Primary activities included: developing and contextualising the Girl Rising curriculum for Rohingya adolescent girls and their caregivers; a training programme for facilitators; and working with UNICEF's local education partners to implement the curriculum in learning centres. The curriculum comprised 12 context-specific modules around 4 stories for adolescent girls, and 6 modules around the stories for caregivers. Although implementation typically takes place over several months, covering one story over 2–3 weeks, implementation in Cox's Bazar was adapted to be delivered over a two-week period with daily sessions for adolescents, and a one-week period with daily sessions for caregivers. The programme was implemented from November 2 to 18, 2026 for girls and from November 9 to 17, 2026 for caregivers. Modules are centred around the stories of four girls – Ruksana, Wadley, Amina and Nasro – who face various challenges and barriers to education, and who work with their families and communities to overcome these challenges. The stories are presented as short movies viewed during the sessions, as well as printed storybooks that include activities to be completed.

Figure 2: Logic model for the Girl Rising programme in the Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh



A 16-year-old who dropped out of school, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

Methods

Study design

From July to December 2025, the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) consortium collaborated with Girl Rising to conduct a mixed-methods one-group (i.e. no control group) pre/post evaluation of the Girl Rising programme pilot in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This evaluation aimed to assess the experiences of 500 Rohingya adolescent girls who participated in Girl Rising at select learning centres in the camps, as well as those of their female primary caregivers. It also explored the experiences and views of the programme implementers. The evaluation included two rounds of quantitative surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews to better understand and unpack the experiences and perspectives of adolescent girls, their female and male caregivers, and programme implementers before and immediately after the Girl Rising intervention.

To guide the evaluation, we focused on the following research questions:

1. Do measures of voice, agency, self-esteem, self-efficacy, individual agency, and aspirations among adolescent girls differ before and after participation in the Girl Rising programme?
2. Do aspirations for their daughter, investment in education, and attitudes among female primary caregivers differ before and after participation in the Girl Rising programme?
3. How has the Girl Rising intervention impacted girls with intersecting vulnerabilities (i.e. girls with disabilities, girls who are already married)?
4. In what ways (if any) have parents impacted adolescent girls' impressions and the effects of the Girl Rising intervention?

Sample and data collection

The quantitative sample list was provided by UNICEF and comprised 522 adolescent girls aged 11–18 from 53 learning centres across six camps in Cox's Bazar (2W, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15), along with their female primary caregivers. The qualitative sample included a purposively selected subset of the quantitative sample, comprising 16 adolescent girls and 10 female and male caregivers at baseline, and 15 of the same adolescent girls, 8 female and male caregivers and 4 programme facilitators at endline. Quantitative data was collected by trained enumerators on tablets using SurveyCTO in Bangla and Chittagonian; qualitative data was collected by trained interviewers in Chittagonian.

Quantitative data collection

Two rounds of quantitative surveys were conducted by trained enumerators prior to and immediately following the Girl Rising implementation. Round 1 surveys were conducted from 17 August to 22 September 2025, with 503 adolescent girls from the UNICEF list and 464 female primary caregivers. One female primary caregiver per household was surveyed. As some adolescents included in the sample were siblings, there are fewer female primary caregivers than adolescents. All baseline survey respondents were invited to participate in the Girl Rising programming.

Round 2 surveys were conducted from 3 December to 23 December 2025, two weeks after the end of implementation. Surveys were attempted with all of the adolescents and female primary caregivers surveyed at baseline; surveys were completed with 501 adolescent girls and 461 female primary caregivers. Among these, 433 adolescents and 271 female primary caregivers had participated in the Girl Rising programming.

Qualitative data collection

The qualitative baseline sample was approached in August 2025 and included in-depth interviews with 16 adolescent girls and 10 female and male caregivers (see Table 1).

The qualitative endline sample was approached in December 2025 and included in-depth interviews targeting the same sub-sample approached at baseline, comprising 15 adolescent girls and 8 female and male caregivers, plus the addition of 4 key informants (implementing staff) approached at endline (see Table 2).

Data collection tools

The quantitative survey instruments were adapted from GAGE instruments used previously with Rohingya adolescents and their caregivers living in the camps. These instruments have been rigorously tested and adapted for the context through quantitative and qualitative piloting (Jones et al., 2019; Seager et al., 2025). The suite of in-depth and interactive qualitative tools was developed and adapted by GAGE and provided additional nuance and personal stories to the wider findings from the quantitative data collection. The two methods should be seen as complementary, and together reveal a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention.

Table 1: Qualitative baseline sample

	Female	Male	Total
Adolescent interviews younger cohort (10–14)	10	0	10
Adolescent interviews older cohort (15–19)	6	0	6
<i>Total adolescent in-depth interviews</i>	16	0	16*
Caregiver interviews	5	5	10
Key informant interviews	0	0	0
Total	21	5	26

*Including additional sample considerations: 2 in-depth interviews with newly arrived Rohingya girls (post-2024); 2 ever-married in-school adolescent girls; 2 adolescent girls living with a disability

Table 2: Qualitative endline sample

	Female	Male	Total
Adolescent interviews younger cohort	10	0	10
Adolescent interviews older cohort	5	0	5
<i>Total adolescent in-depth interviews</i>	15	0	15
Caregiver interviews	4	4	8
Key informant interviews	4	0	4
Total	23	4	27

Ethics

Written or verbal consent was obtained from all respondents. Informed consent was obtained from the parents/guardians of legal minors, and assent was obtained from adolescents themselves. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected during face-to-face interviews by enumerators and interviewers who were the same sex as the respondent. Enumerators had been specially trained to work with adolescents, including adhering to child protection policies and best practices in conducting fieldwork. They had also received training on the GAGE research design and conceptual framework.

The study design was approved by the George Washington University Committee on Human Research, Institutional Review Board (071721), the ODI Global Research Ethics Committee (ODI R025002) and the Institutional Review Board of the Institute for Health Economics at the University of Dhaka (IHE/IRB/DU/40/2025/Final; IHE/IRB/DU/67/2025/Final). Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Review Board of the University of Chittagong (CU-SOC-2100012) for conducting the qualitative research. Permission to conduct research in the refugee camps was obtained from the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner.

Measures

Primary outcomes for adolescent girls include their voice, agency, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and aspirations; for caregivers, primary outcomes include their aspirations for their daughter, investment in education, and attitudes. Table 3 summarises the measures used.

We also include measures of adolescents' and caregivers' participation in, and experiences of, the Girl Rising programme. Specifically, we measure perceptions of the sessions and their implementation, as well as details around adolescents' favourite and least favourite Girl Rising stories.

Analysis

For the quantitative analysis, we first present descriptive statistics of demographic characteristics and outcome measures for adolescents and their female primary caregivers prior to the implementation of Girl Rising. Then, we assess changes in outcome measures over time using an ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression model. We cluster standard errors by learning centre. Quantitative analyses were conducted using Stata version 18.5.

For the qualitative analysis, the qualitative interviews were transcribed, translated into English, and coded according to a thematic coding book drawing on the GAGE conceptual framework, using the software package

Table 3: Indicators measuring Voice and Agency of adolescent girls

Outcome	Measure
Adolescent girls	
Voice	Indicator that adolescent feels comfortable expressing an opinion to or disagreeing with people who are much older than you, such as parents and the elderly
	Indicator that adolescent feels she has a say in how much education she will get
	Indicator that adolescent feels she has a say in when she will end her schooling
	Indicator that adolescent feels she has a say in when she will marry
	Indicator that adolescent has discussed her education with her mother/father
	Indicator that adolescent has discussed her dreams/aspirations with her mother/father
Agency	Indicator that adolescent has travelled outside of her camp block at least once a month in the last three months
	Indicator that adolescent has gone to a place in the community where she feels comfortable with friends in the past three months
Attitudes	An 11-item attitude scale, with scores ranging from 11-33 points, where higher scores indicate more restrictive attitudes. Each attitude is scored using a 3-point Likert scale. For items 1-8, 1=Disagree, 2=Partially agree, and 3=Agree. For items 9-11, the codes are reversed. Attitudes are summed to calculate the overall score. Individual attitudes are listed in Table 13.
Self-esteem	Confidence and Curiosity Scale: An index score that ranges from 0-16 constructed from responses to eight questions (scale items provided in Appendix Table A1).
Self-efficacy and individual agency	Growth Mindset Score: An index score that ranges from 1-4 constructed from responses to four statements, where higher values indicate higher growth mindset (scale items provided in Appendix Table A2). Adapted from a World Bank module.
	Grit Score: An index score that ranges from 1-4 constructed from responses to seven statements, where higher values indicate higher grit (scale items provided in Appendix Table A3). Developed by Alan, Boneva, and Ertac (2019).
	Malleability Score: An index score that ranges from 1-4 constructed from responses to six statements, where higher values indicate higher grit (scale items provided in Appendix Table A4). Developed by Alan, Boneva, and Ertac (2019).
	Control Scale: An index score that ranges from 1-10, based on a response to the question: 'Some people feel that they have a great deal of control over their own lives. Others feel that what they do has very little effect on what happens to them. On a scale from 1-10, with 1 being very little and 10 being complete control, how would you classify yourself?'
Female primary caregivers	
Aspirations and expectations	An indicator that caregiver aspires for adolescent to attain some secondary school or higher
	An indicator that caregiver aspires for adolescent to attain university degree or higher
	Age at which caregiver expects adolescent to leave full-time education
	Age at which caregiver expects adolescent to get married
Investment in education	An indicator that the caregiver provides time or resources to adolescent for studying, which is equal to 1 if any of the following indicators are equal to 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces chores for adolescent to study • Provides lighting for adolescent to study at night • Provides a place for adolescent to study
	An indicator that the caregiver supervises or assists in adolescent's studies
	An indicator that the caregiver talked to adolescent about her education
Attitudes	A 6-item attitude scale, with scores ranging from 6-18 points, where higher scores indicate more restrictive attitudes. Each attitude is scored using a 3-point Likert scale. For items 1-3, 1=Disagree, 2=Partially agree, and 3=Agree. For items 4-6, the codes are reversed. Attitudes are summed to calculate the overall score. Individual attitudes are listed in Table 14.

MAXQDA 24. The qualitative research teams held debriefing sessions (during and immediately after data collection) to discuss emerging findings and inductively derive codes, which were added to the codebook accordingly. To preserve respondent confidentiality, the team anonymised the camp locations. Data analysis was done in collaboration between the GAGE hub and country research teams. During qualitative data analysis, care was taken to identify cross-cutting themes while also allowing space for unique voices more specific to

individual experiences. The qualitative findings presented in this study draw primarily on in-depth field and post-field debriefs, as well as observational analyses conducted by the qualitative fieldwork team lead.

To contribute to efforts that take into account gender- and age-specific experiences, other social characteristics (including marital status and disability) were captured in the qualitative sample across fieldwork rounds, and findings have been analysed and reported based on these disaggregations, where relevant.



Menstrual hygiene and breastfeeding corner, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

Findings

Sample characteristics

Table 4 presents Round 1 demographic characteristics of the adolescent girls and their households, for girls who were surveyed at both rounds. The girls were aged 13 years on average, and the majority (92%) were born in Myanmar. Most were literate in English (86%), and many were literate in Burmese (70%) based on self-reports. The sample consisted of girls enrolled in grades 1 to 11 in the learning centres, with most girls in grades 4 to 10 (see distribution in Table 4). Rates of hunger in the past 4 weeks were low (8%). Less than half of the girls (42%) had access to a mobile phone.

More than a quarter of girls (29%) lived in households below the national poverty line. Only 15% lived in a female-headed household, and 37% of girls' household heads had completed primary school or higher. The female primary

caregivers were aged 38 years on average. For most adolescent girls (98%), the female primary caregiver was their mother (others were grandmother, aunt, mother-in-law, sister, and sister-in-law).

Girls' perceptions and attitudes towards the Girl Rising intervention

In Table 5, we summarise the experiences of adolescent girls who participated in the Girl Rising programme (N=433, 86% of the overall sample). The vast majority (90%) attended every Girl Rising session; only 5% attended half of the sessions or fewer. Adolescent girls discussed the sessions primarily with their mother (86%), father (62%), and friends from the programme (59%). Most (92%) reported that they felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings during the sessions.

Table 4: Baseline demographic characteristics of adolescent girls and their households, among adolescent girls surveyed at Round 1 and Round 2 (n=501)

	Mean
Adolescent girls	
Age	13
Born in Myanmar	91.9%
Born in Bangladesh	8.1%
Can read and write in English	86.5%
Can read and write in Burmese	70.5%
Not enrolled in learning centre	2.8%
Current grade, among enrolled (n=481)	
Grade 1 (standard 0)	0.2%
Grade 2 (standard 1)	1.0%
Grade 3 (standard 2)	4.8%
Grade 4 (standard 3)	12.2%
Grade 5 (standard 4)	14.6%
Grade 6 (standard 5)	10.0%
Grade 7 (standard 6)	9.3%
Grade 8 (standard 7)	7.2%
Grade 9 (standard 8)	27.3%
Grade 10 (standard 9)	12.2%
Grade 11 (standard 10)	1.2%
Went hungry in past 4 weeks due to limited food	8.1%
Has access to mobile phone	41.7%
Household	
Poverty rate (national poverty line)	28.8%
Household head is female	15.4%
Household head completed primary school or higher	37.2%
Age of female primary caregiver	39
Female primary caregiver is adolescent girl's mother	98.3%

Table 5: Experiences of adolescent girls who participated in the Girl Rising programme (n=433)

	Mean
Attendance	
Every session	89.8%
Most sessions	5.6%
Half of the sessions or fewer	4.7%
Discussed Girl Rising information with:	
Mother	85.9%
Father	62.1%
Brother	34.4%
Sister	48.7%
Friends from Girl Rising	59.1%
Friends outside of Girl Rising	40.6%
Other family	48.3%
Other non-family adult	35.6%
Teacher or school administrator	18.5%
No one	0.2%
Felt comfortable sharing thoughts and feelings in sessions	91.7%

Table 6 presents adolescent girls' perceptions of the Girl Rising programme. Nearly all (96%) agreed that they learnt something new from the programme, that they were excited to attend the sessions (100%), and that the facilitators made the sessions engaging (100%). Girls agreed that the programme had helped them think about their goals (99%) and ways they can talk to their family about issues they face (99%), and that Girl Rising made them want to do something about issues facing girls in their communities (99%). However, 20% reported that the Girl Rising stories made them feel discouraged about their future (5% strongly agreed and 15% agreed).

Qualitative data with adolescent girl participants demonstrates overwhelmingly positive perceptions and attitudes towards Girl Rising programming, describing it as inspiring and unique within the camp context. Adolescent girls strongly valued the patient, kind, non-violent teaching

style of facilitators, who engaged with them in a calm manner and made extra efforts to accommodate the participation of adolescent girls with disabilities (e.g. speaking loudly for girls with hearing impairments).

Through this programme, we learnt how to move forward even when there are many obstacles and problems. Every session of this programme was very good and done in a nice way. We could understand everything. Through this programme, we learnt how to use the power and courage that we already have. (15-year-old girl)

Among all the programmes I joined this year, I liked this programme the most. Through this programme, we became more motivated. Before this, we did not go to school. (13-year-old girl)

Table 6: Perceptions of adolescent girls who participated in the Girl Rising programme (n=433)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I learnt something new from the Girl Rising programme	57.5%	38.1%	3.2%	1.2%
I was excited to attend the Girl Rising sessions	63.5%	36.3%	0.2%	0.0%
My facilitator made the sessions engaging	55.0%	44.8%	0.2%	0.0%
Girl Rising helped me think about my own future goals	50.3%	49.0%	0.2%	0.5%
Girl Rising helped me think about ways I can talk about issues girls face with my family	38.6%	60.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Girl Rising made me want to do something about issues facing girls in my community	43.9%	55.4%	0.5%	0.2%
The Girl Rising stories made me feel discouraged about my future	5.3%	14.5%	57.7%	22.4%

They taught us very well. Our mentors explained everything clearly. If we did not understand something, they explained it again. They never hit us. (13-year-old girl)

Through the four stories used in the sessions, girls reported that they developed a connection to the characters, and the story-based narratives had relevance to their own lives. Girl Rising stories seemed to be both inspirational (for example, demonstrating persistence and parental support for education) as well as cautionary (such as highlighting the consequences of child marriage). Physical storybooks provided through the programme were appreciated and may continue to motivate girls after the sessions ended.

The qualitative data highlighted that adolescent girls overwhelmingly shared Girl Rising stories daily with their family members, creating ongoing conversations at home. Parents validated the content and used story characters as teaching examples, showing diffusion of the programme messages throughout families.

I told what we learn every day after coming back from the session because it was so exciting. Everyone waited for me to come back every day from the sessions and ask me what I learnt. I told them about the stories we watched on the tablet. I told them how there is a girl named Ruksana who had a dream. But her dream faced barriers. Her teacher did not support her dream, but her father did. (16-year-old girl with a physical disability)

Despite strong enthusiasm, some participants reported forgetting the content after the sessions, suggesting that the 12-session format, although impactful, may be insufficient.

I learnt a lot of things, but I have forgotten some things. However, I still remember how good it was. (15-year-old girl)

Notwithstanding their strong desire to participate, older married adolescent girls mentioned feeling excluded because sessions targeted younger unmarried girls, and they were not allowed to attend in any case by their in-laws, who control and decide on their mobility.

Everyone is a young or unmarried girl. I am completely different. That's why I got shy and embarrassed and didn't go. I wanted to go there so much. But I didn't go in the end. (19-year-old young woman, married and pregnant)

Another married girl could only attend learning sessions because they took place in a centre that shared a wall with her house, requiring no outdoor travel or burqas. Any programme requiring outdoor movement would otherwise be inaccessible to her.

Although personal mobility remained restricted for some participants, others noted broader positive changes in the camp community, noting that more parents permit girls to attend school upon seeing Girl Rising participants attend the sessions.

Before, girls were not sent to school much. Now, after seeing us, parents are sending girls of our age to school more. Now we can see more girls present in school. (15-year-old girl)

Parents' perceptions and attitudes towards the Girl Rising intervention

In Table 7, we present details of the female primary caregivers' experiences with the Girl Rising programme. Of the 6 sessions offered, caregivers attended an average of 5.2. Most caregivers (87%) reported feeling comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings during the sessions; however, 92% agreed they would have felt more comfortable if sessions were held separately for men and women. Caregivers discussed the Girl Rising information with other family members (77%) and non-family adults (53%); discussion with their husband is included in 'other family members'.

Table 8 presents female primary caregivers' perceptions about the Girl Rising programme. Nearly all (96%) agreed that they learnt something new from the programme, that they were excited to attend the sessions (100%), and that the facilitators made the sessions engaging (100%). Caregivers agreed that Girl Rising helped them think about their daughters' future goals (100%) and ways they can talk to their daughters about issues facing girls (100%), made them want to do something about those issues (99%) and, importantly, made them feel empowered to support their daughters in achieving their goals (100%). However, 30% reported that the stories made them feel discouraged about their daughters' futures (7% strongly agreed, 23% agreed).

Qualitative data from caregivers underscores positive perceptions of the Girl Rising programme while also highlighting barriers to participation. The parents who participated in Girl Rising mentioned attending multiple sessions despite health challenges, work constraints and household responsibilities, which nonetheless impacted

Table 7: Experiences of female primary caregivers who participated in the Girl Rising programme (n=271)

	Mean
Number of sessions attended (out of 6 possible)	5.2
Discussed Girl Rising information with:	
Mother	17.0%
Father	8.5%
Brother	10.7%
Sister	15.9%
Friends from Girl Rising	40.2%
Friends outside of Girl Rising	27.7%
Other family	77.1%
Other non-family adult	53.1%
Teacher or school administrator	10.0%
Did not talk to anyone	0.7%
Felt comfortable sharing thoughts and feelings during sessions	87.1%
Agreed that gender-separated sessions would have been more comfortable	91.9%

Table 8: Perceptions of female primary caregivers who participated in the Girl Rising programme (n=271)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I learnt something new from the Girl Rising programme	45.0%	53.1%	1.1%	0.7%
I was excited to attend the Girl Rising sessions	48.3%	51.7%	0.0%	0.0%
My facilitator made the sessions engaging	48.7%	50.9%	0.4%	0.0%
Girl Rising helped me think about my daughter's future goals	32.8%	66.8%	0.4%	0.0%
Girl Rising helped me think about ways I can talk about issues girls face with my daughter	34.3%	65.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Girl Rising made me want to do something about issues facing girls in my community	33.9%	64.9%	1.1%	0.0%
The Girl Rising stories made me feel discouraged about my daughter's future	7.0%	22.5%	52.4%	18.1%
Girl Rising made me feel empowered to support my daughter in achieving her goals	41.0%	58.7%	0.0%	0.4%

their continuity of attendance. Attendance ranged from 2 to 7 sessions, with many parents expressing regret about missed days and wishing for broader programme access.

I learnt these things, but I went only for 2 days, so I learnt less. I feel regret. If I could attend every day, I could learn many more new things. Because of my illness, I could not join all the sessions, and that makes me sad. (35-year-old mother of adolescent girl)

Yes. It will be very helpful for the future. I hope more parents attend. I tell other fathers to go, but they say they are too busy. They don't understand the importance. (50-year-old father of adolescent girl)

With regards to the Girl Rising curriculum content, parents provided positive feedback and recognised the value of the training delivery, the storytelling content

and the discussions. Parents also spoke of the positive transformation they saw in their daughters during the programme, shifting from passive and shy to confident and questioning students who now interact comfortably with the facilitators and raise their hands in class.

They used to be shy before. Now they raise their hands, they answer questions. I am very proud. My daughters are very proactive – they are talking a lot in the class, and they're even teaching the mentor who was taking the sessions. [Laughs] The mentor told me herself, she said, 'Your daughters ask so many good questions.' (45-year-old father of adolescent girl)

Nevertheless, one critical case revealed parental resistance to programme participation: one mother refused permission for her daughter to attend the sessions,

and forbade contact with other girls who had attended, highlighting parental gatekeeping as a significant barrier.

My mother said no... Because my parents do not want me to... My parents said not to talk to them [girls who attended Girl Rising]. (12-year-old girl)

Through qualitative interviews, parents also actively promoted the programme to others and suggested it should be expanded or made mandatory, indicating strong perceived value beyond personal benefit.

They should do more sessions. Maybe for boys too. Boys also need to learn to support their sisters, to not harass girls in the community. If boys learn these things young, the community will change. (28-year-old father of adolescent girl)

One mother, however, noted that the presence of males in sessions inhibited women's participation due to religious and cultural norms about women speaking up in front of men, which suggests that gender-segregated formats would enhance impact.

Girls' favourite Girl Rising story

Table 9 summarises the four stories included in the curriculum: Ruksana, Wadley, Amina and Nasro. More than half (55%) of adolescent girls reported that Ruksana's story was their favourite of the four Girl Rising stories. This story features a girl from Kolkata, India, and her family, who work together to overcome the challenges they face

living in the city. The story focuses on Ruksana's supportive father. The primary reason why girls liked this story was that they found it inspiring (49%; see Table 10 and Figure 3). Just under a quarter of girls (24%) reported that Amina's story was their favourite, primarily because they found it inspiring (54%; see Table 10 and Figure 3). However, 17% of girls indicated that they did not like this story (Table 10), saying that it made them feel sad (67%) and uncomfortable (21%). Amina is a girl from Afghanistan who was forced to marry at age 11 and became a mother soon afterwards. This story shows the impact of child marriage on her life and highlights her aspirations for the future. Amina's story features especially restrictive gender norms that hinder girls' education and freedom. The stories of Wadley (a girl from Haiti who has her education disrupted by an earthquake and is determined to continue learning) and Nasro (a girl living in one of the biggest refugee camps in Kenya, who loses her mother and faces challenges in going to school) were less popular (Table 10).

Qualitative interviews shed light on girls' opinions of the stories. Ruksana's story resonated strongly with the participants who were involved in the qualitative interviews, as it did with those in the quantitative sample. Her story of pursuing artistic dreams with her father's support was admirable for the adolescent girl participants, particularly illustrating that parental support enables achievement, even for families living in extreme poverty. Girls treasured this model of protective rather than restrictive parenting.

Table 9: The four stories in the Girl Rising programme

	Story	Session Objective
1	Ruksana	To help students understand the importance of both education and dreams
2	Wadley	To help students understand the importance of grit and determination and the need to stand up for themselves
3	Amina	To help students understand that both girls and boys have an equal right to education, and to help them identify local role models.
4	Nasro	To inspire continuing education in contexts of displacement and conflict

Table 10: Adolescent girls' experiences with the Girl Rising stories (n=433)

	Story			
	Ruksana	Wadley	Amina	Nasro
Favorite story	55.2%	13.9%	23.8%	6.9%
What girls liked about their favorite story:				
Could relate to the girl in the story	13.4%	8.3%	14.6%	13.3%
Enjoyed the activities related to the story	24.7%	25.0%	22.3%	30.0%
Enjoyed the discussion related to the story	12.6%	18.3%	6.8%	13.3%
Found the story inspiring	49.4%	48.3%	54.4%	43.3%
Did not like story	0.7%	4.2%	16.9%	3.5%

I liked Ruksana's story... Instead of her father being afraid or her father keeping her at home, he made her go to school even more and supported her dream. (15-year-old girl)

In her story, she was scolded by her teachers. She felt sad. I felt sad for her too. Even her mother scolded her. Everyone told her to stop drawing. But her father supported her. Her father took her to the shop to buy her art pencils. He believed in her. I liked that. She had a dream, and her father supported it. It's beautiful. I wish all fathers were like that. (15-year-old girl)

Conversely, some girls disliked Amina's story, and multiple respondents expressed strong negative reactions to it. Other girls, however, still mentioned learning about determination and personal growth through her example. Through Amina's story, some adolescent girls displayed strong opposition to child marriage, mentioning the physical harm, emotional suffering, and childbirth dangers it can bring, coupled with the destruction of girls' dreams. Girls reported learning to avoid child marriage (i.e. marriage under 18 years) and aspiring to advocate against it.

From Amina's story, I learnt that I can't get married early. I have to stop my marriage if someone tries. Child marriage is not good for your health. But it is so common here. A lot of girls get married so early. A lot of my friends got married already. They are 14, 15 years old and married. (15-year-old girl)

I like Amina's story the most. Because even after facing so much hardship, she worked hard and made her dream come true... By seeing her, people in her community became inspired. I liked her story the most

– because of her, other girls were able to study and increase their confidence. (15-year-old girl)

I did not like Amina's story... Amina had to do housework from the age of 3. She was married at 11 years old. She had a baby at 12... I did not like this. (13-year-old girl)

Girls' voice and agency

Quantitative data shows an increase in the percentage of girls who reported feeling comfortable expressing their opinions to their elders, from 56% before Girl Rising to 69% after the programme (Table 11). There was also a significant increase in the proportion of girls who felt able to discuss their education and dreams with their parents; notably, the percentage of girls who had discussed their dreams with their father increased from 47% before Girl Rising to 78% after (see Table 11 and Figure 4).

Adolescent girls' discussion of education and dreams with their parents before and after participation in the Girl Rising programme (n=433)

Adolescent girls who participated in the programme spoke about using their voice more, including speaking up in class, asking questions despite fear of mistakes, and standing up with more courage. In a significant number of instances, adolescent girls correlated these changes with the intervention:

Before, if someone asked a question in class or if the teacher asked something, we did not answer. We stayed quiet. Now, with courage and confidence, we stand up. Even if we make a mistake, the teachers correct us... I started asking questions after joining the Girl Rising programme. Now I stand up in the classroom with courage to learn something. (15-year-old girl)

Figure 3: Adolescent girls' reasons for liking Girl Rising stories, by favourite story (n=433)

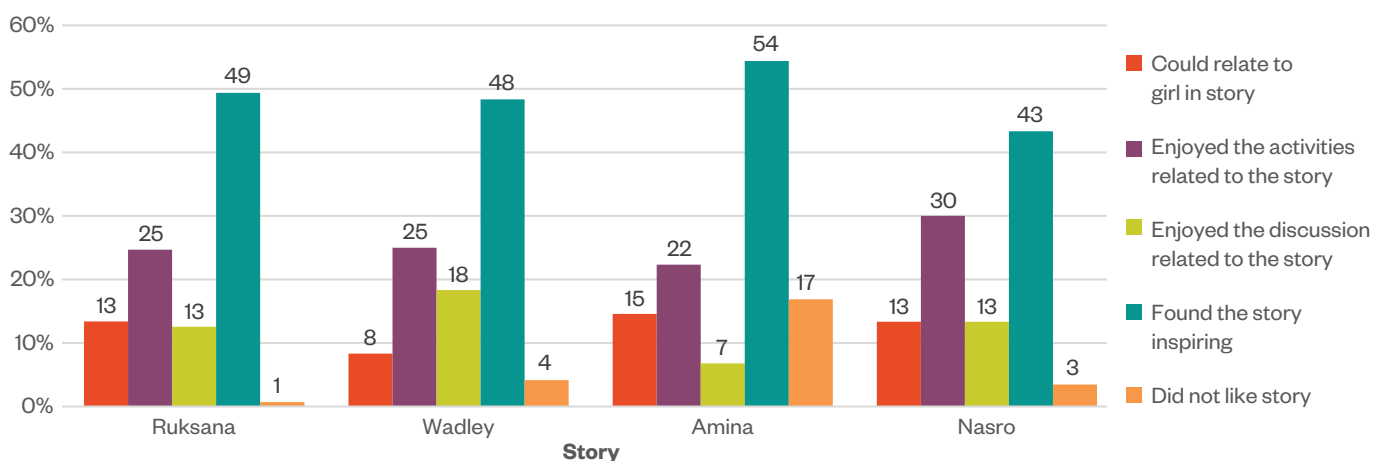
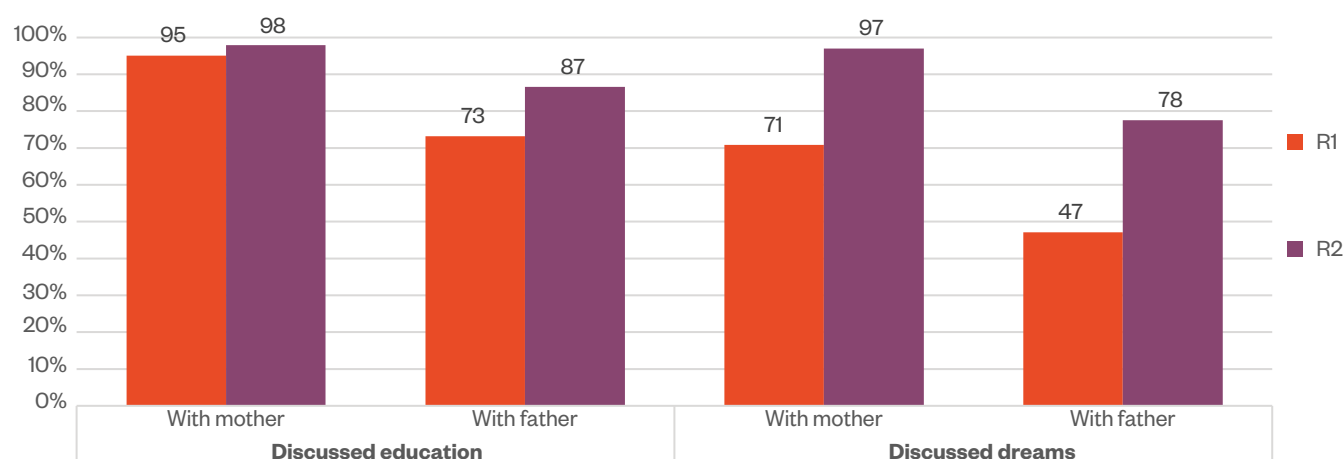


Table 11: Outcomes among panel sample of adolescent girls who participated in the Girl Rising programme in Rounds 1 and 2, and the difference between means across rounds (n=430)

	Round 1	Round 2	R2-R1 Diff
	Mean	Mean	Significance
Voice			
Feels comfortable expressing an opinion to elders	55.8%	69.1%	***
Voice Index (0–3)	1.79	1.97	*
Has little bit or great deal of say in how much schooling	83.0%	88.6%	*
Has little bit or great deal of say in when end schooling	73.4%	79.0%	
Has little bit or great deal of say in when to marry	23.1%	29.4%	
Discussed education with father or mother	96.7%	98.6%	**
Discussed education with father	73.2%	86.6%	***
Discussed education with mother	95.1%	97.9%	**
Discussed dreams with father or mother	73.8%	97.4%	***
Discussed dreams with father	47.1%	77.5%	***
Discussed dreams with mother	70.9%	97.0%	***
Mobility			
Travelled outside of camp block at least once per month in past 3 months	7.7%	9.5%	
Gone to a place in the community where she feels comfortable in the past 3 months	65.6%	66.7%	

Notes: P values presented are from tests of differences in means between survey rounds, with standard errors clustered by learning centre. * p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01
 Table 12: Outcomes among panel sample of adolescent girls who participated in the Girl Rising programme in Rounds 1 and 2, and the difference between means across rounds (n=430)

Figure 4: Adolescent girls’ discussion of education and dreams with their parents before and after participation in the Girl Rising programme (n=433)



Girls’ increased ability and desire to use their voice was also linked to the prospect of continuing their studies, and the aspirations and dreams this fuels. This included believing that girls can achieve their goals through working hard and studying, even when feeling unmotivated. This shift was not only highlighted by adolescent girl participants but also validated by interviewers who confirmed observable increases in girls’ confidence.

My interest in studying increased a lot. Before, even if I had interest, I did not always study. Now, to make my dream come true, I study even when I do not feel like

it. I want to study a lot and go higher in life. My inner strength has increased. (13-year-old girl)

By studying, I can do something good for myself, and I can also speak for the people of my camp. I can speak in front of others, and if there is any problem, I can raise my voice. (12-year-old girl)

Adolescent girls with disabilities who participated in the programme also reported being more able to voice their opinions while still experiencing sadness about their

varied impairments. They also spoke about the Girl Rising stories, which helped them to recognise that others face challenges in life too, normalising struggle.

I still feel sad sometimes. It won't go away completely. I am still sad about my hearing... But I am not that scared anymore. I am more confident. I learnt that people have a lot of problems, and still they study. Like the girls of Girl Rising. They had so many problems, but they kept going. (15-year-old girl with a hearing disability)

Girls' educational and occupational aspirations

The quantitative data indicates that girls' aspirations around education increased (Figure 5), with the percentage of girls who aspired to attain at least some university education rising from 9% to 24% post-implementation (see Table 12 and Figure 5).

Adolescent girls' educational goals and aspirations before and after participation in the Girl Rising programme (n=433)

Qualitative data further highlighted that adolescent girls who participated in the programme demonstrated strong educational aspirations, and also more concrete planning in order to achieve their dreams. Girls mentioned needing to study science, understanding the required knowledge that would lead to differing professions, and needing strong determination. Participants showed increasingly clear understandings of pathways, specific steps needed, and a sense of forward planning.

First, I want to study and become a doctor. After becoming a doctor, I want to serve the girls of my community. Now in the camp, most doctors are male doctors. Because of this, women in the camp feel shy and uncomfortable to share their problems in front of male doctors. That is why I want to become a female doctor... I want to become a doctor in the future. For that, I am studying science now. Just yesterday, I studied

white blood cells and red blood cells. To become a doctor, I must know these things. (15-year-old girl)

Before, I wanted to be a teacher, but I did not know how to become one or how to study. After the Girl Rising programme, my wish to become a teacher has increased a lot... I can connect these lessons with my school studies. (13-year-old girl)

Now it is 2025 and I am a student. I learnt how to think about where I want to see myself in 2035. I learnt how to nurture dreams inside myself, how to dream, and how to keep determination to achieve those dreams. (12-year-old girl)

One participant who had stopped attending school due to illness and menstruation-related challenges was re-engaged in education through Girl Rising. She explained that previously, she had lied to her parents to avoid school, but now she was attending daily with enthusiasm – something she attributed to the learning and personal development gained through the intervention.

Before, I did not go to school regularly. I used to lie to my parents and say there was no study at school. I stayed at home and did not go to school every day. But now, I go to school every day, and I like studying. (13-year-old girl)

Some unmarried girls articulated specific educational and work goals while simultaneously acknowledging that gender norms will nonetheless crush their aspirations. They mentioned being expected to marry by age 18, whereas their younger brothers will continue studying. They also noted that they will be bad-mouthed and bring shame to their families should they venture to get a job.

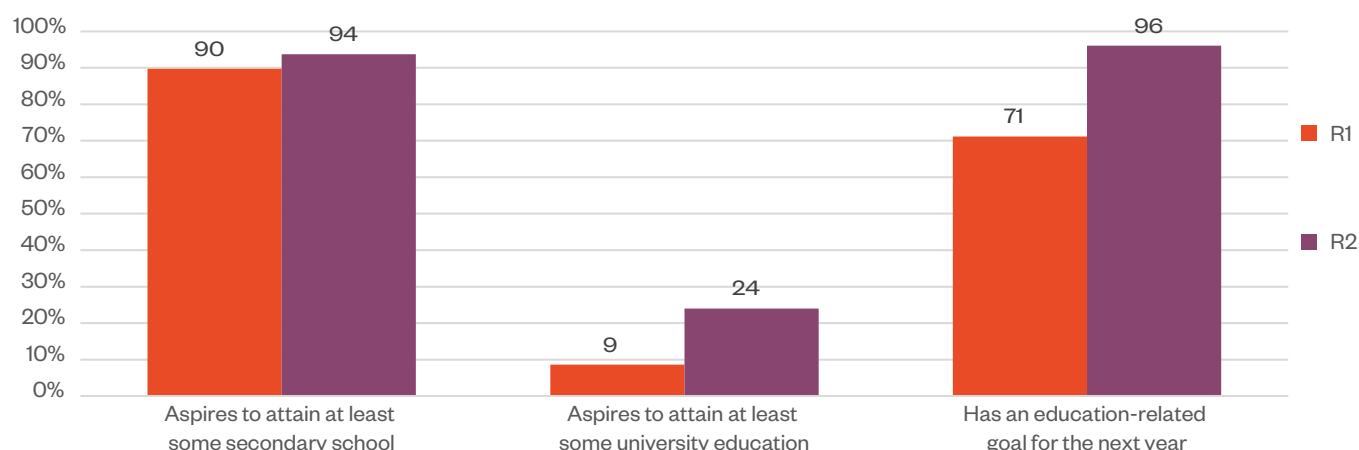
They will ask me to get married. Since I will be 18, I will be after age to get married... My brother will continue to study even when he is 18. (15-year-old girl)

Table 12: Outcomes among panel sample of adolescent girls who participated in the Girl Rising programme in Rounds 1 and 2, and the difference between means across rounds (n=430)

	Round 1	Round 2	R2-R1 Diff
	Mean	Mean	Significance
Aspirations			
Aspires to attain at least some secondary school (or higher)	89.7%	93.7%	**
Aspires to attain at least some university education	8.6%	24.0%	***
Has an education-related goal for the next year	71.2%	96.0%	***

Notes: P values presented are from tests of differences in means between survey rounds, with standard errors clustered by learning centre. * p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01.

Figure 5: Adolescent girls' educational goals and aspirations before and after participation in the Girl Rising programme (n=433)



Gender norms and attitudes

The quantitative data shows a shift among adolescent girls towards more gender-equitable attitudes (Table 13). The most substantive shifts were in attitudes around taking boys out of school for work (27% before Girl Rising vs 73% after) and male decision-making authority at home (21% before Girl Rising vs 42% after).

Regarding shifts in gender norms, attitudes and behaviours, the qualitative findings show encouraging progress. Adolescent girls who participated in the programme described holding more gender-equitable

beliefs, moving away from economically driven justifications for inequality (e.g. boys need to study well to earn, whereas girls do not need to as they will be married) toward realising this as unfair, and instead affirming equal capabilities. They demonstrated awareness of gender-based challenges, recognised girls' potential, and identified solutions, including the need for support from parents and the wider community. These shifts remain largely rooted in education, seen increasingly as the entry point for fostering a more gender-equitable community.

Table 13: Gender norms and attitudes among panel sample of adolescent girls who participated in the Girl Rising Programme in Rounds 1 and 2, and the difference between means across rounds (n=430)

	Round 1	Round 2	R2-R1 Diff
	Mean	Mean	Significance
Attitudes			
CR attitudes score (11-33)*	25.17	28.16	***
Disagrees: Adolescent girls should marry before the age of 18 years	85.8%	96.3%	***
Disagrees: If a family can afford for one child to go to secondary school it should be the boy only	50.7%	70.0%	***
Disagrees: Only boys should learn about science, technology, and math	75.6%	85.3%	**
Disagrees: Girls should be sent to school only if they are not needed to help at home	61.4%	70.5%	*
Disagrees: A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family	32.8%	36.0%	
Disagrees: A man should have the final word on decisions in his home	21.2%	41.6%	***
Disagrees: If a family can afford for one child to go to tertiary school it should be the boy only	47.7%	67.9%	***
Disagrees: It is appropriate for parents to take boys out of school for work	27.2%	72.6%	***
Agrees: Our culture makes it harder for girls to achieve their goals than boys	92.6%	92.1%	
Agrees: A girl's marriage can wait until she has completed secondary school	94.9%	98.8%	**
Agrees: Girls and boys should share household tasks equally	86.0%	94.9%	***

Notes: Higher attitude scores represent less restrictive attitudes.

I learnt that boys and girls can do anything if they want. The parents and the community have to be supportive in order for girls to be more educated. (15-year-old girl)

Before, we used to think that boys can do things but girls cannot. We used to sit without trying. But later, we understood that boys can do some work, girls can also do some work that boys cannot do, and some work both boys and girls can do equally. We learnt that boys and girls are equal. (15-year-old girl)

Girl Rising participants recognised that education can enable them to move beyond traditionally prescribed roles. Importantly, some participants also expressed the view that girls' continued education and the maintenance of culturally defined gender norms are not necessarily incompatible.

If I move forward with dignity and protect my self-respect, if I study properly, then I can also go outside like boys, study, work, and achieve my dreams while respecting myself. (12-year-old girl)

Parents' outcomes

Table 14 presents outcomes among female primary caregivers before and after the Girl Rising programme. There was an improvement in attitudes around girls' education; the percentage of caregivers who disagreed that 'If a family can afford for only one child to go to secondary school, it should be the boy' increased from 40% to 52%, and the percentage who disagreed that 'Girls should be sent to school only if they are not needed to help at home' increased from 61% to 74%. We also saw slight increases in the age at which caregivers expect adolescent girls to leave full-time education (18.2 years before Girl Rising, 18.9 years after) and get married (19.9 years before, 20.6 years after). Additionally, there were slight increases in the percentage of caregivers providing resources for their adolescents' studies; caregivers providing lighting for girls to study at night rose from 94% before Girl Rising to 99% after, while caregivers providing a place for girls to study increased from 93% to 99%.

Qualitative data demonstrated that mothers and fathers who participated in the programme displayed



A 16-year-old girl fetching water in Cox's Bazar © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

Table 14: Outcomes among panel sample of female primary caregivers who participated in the Girl Rising programme in Rounds 1 and 2, and the difference between means across rounds (n=270)

	Round 1	Round 2	R2-R1 Diff
	Mean	Mean	Significance
Aspirations and expectations			
Aspires for adolescent to attain some secondary school or higher	94.1%	97.8%	**
Aspires for adolescent to attain university degree or higher	6.7%	7.1%	
Age caregiver expects adolescent to leave full-time education	18.19	18.91	***
Expects adolescent to leave full-time education after age 18	34.6%	36.6%	
Age caregiver expects adolescent to get married	19.92	20.56	***
Expects adolescent to get married after age 20	24.1%	32.0%	*
Investment in education			
Provides time or resources to adolescent for studying	98.9%	99.6%	
Reduces chores for adolescent to study	98.1%	99.3%	
Provides lighting for adolescent to study at night	93.7%	98.9%	**
Provides a place for adolescent to study	93.3%	98.9%	**
Supervises or assists in adolescent's studies	96.7%	92.2%	*
Talked to adolescent about her education	96.3%	98.1%	
Attitudes			
Attitudes score (6-18)	15.21	15.93	***
Disagrees: If a family can afford for only one child to go to secondary school, it should be the boy	40.4%	52.6%	**
Disagrees: Girls should be sent to school only if they are not needed to help at home	60.7%	74.1%	***
Disagrees: A girl may be married off at an early age (<=15) if it ensures her security and well-being	81.1%	85.2%	
Agrees: Girls and boys should share household tasks equally	90.7%	95.2%	*
Agrees: A girl's marriage can wait until she has completed secondary schooling	95.9%	97.8%	
Agrees: Our culture makes it harder for girls to achieve their goals than boys	91.1%	95.2%	*

Notes: P values presented are from tests of differences in means between survey rounds, with standard errors clustered by learning centre. * p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01.

more gender-equitable attitudes, mentioning that girls' and boys' education should be equally prioritised and can be beneficial to both equally.

Some parents mentioned that, aside from the positive impact on their daughters, the Girl Rising programme also had positive impacts on themselves. Mothers reported increased confidence to speak in community conflicts, support neighbours, and advocate for children's education, attributing this directly to the Girl Rising sessions.

Before, I thought I could not do anything. But after joining the Girl Rising programme, I learnt that if someone wants to know something, I can explain it. I can show people the right path and help them understand what is good and what is bad. (mother of a 15-year-old girl)

However, even when mothers attended sessions and agreed that gender norms should change, some felt powerless to act in ways that contravene community perceptions (and possible backlash). This illustrates that changes in an individual's beliefs cannot overcome deeply entrenched norms and attitudes.

My mother said that she agreed with the session teachings [on the need for more equality between girls and boys]. But she cannot do anything about how the community sees these issues. So nothing can be done. (16-year-old girl with a physical disability)

Conclusions and recommendations for programming and future scale-up

Overall, the mixed-methods findings indicate positive short-term effects of the Girl Rising initiative. However, to further leverage the effects of the programme and promote sustainable change, we recommend the following actions:

1. Provide separate sessions for female and male caregivers so as to encourage greater attendance and active participation in sessions.
2. Design and implement complementary sessions for boys, given that they are key actors in shaping and reinforcing discriminatory gender norms, both in the present and as future husbands, and in order to foster their potential role as champions of gender equality.
3. Advocate for the integration of programme elements into the Myanmar curriculum so as to support scale up and sustainability.
4. Invest in further adaptation of the materials and stories to the Rohingya context to ensure maximum alignment with adolescent and caregiver realities, and

explicitly address how to navigate resistance or even backlash within households and communities.

5. Undertake longitudinal evaluation of the longer-term effects of the intervention and consider testing different implementation approaches – i.e. compare the compressed version of the programme that this study assessed with a longer implementation schedule (over a number of months) to investigate the differential rates of uptake of messages among adolescents and caregivers.
6. Continue to enhance the pedagogical approach and the training provided to facilitators, reinforcing the kind, patient and positive disciplinary approach that girl participants highly valued. In addition, provide facilitators with tools as to how they can best engage participants, and support them to navigate and reflect on the stories that can trigger negative emotions, sadness and, potentially, backlash.



A Rohingya girl fetching water in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh © Nathalie Bertrams/GAGE 2026

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Appendix

Table A1: Confidence and Curiosity Index

Item no.	Item statement	Answer options
1	Tariq/Himadri thinks that classwork is much easier for Tariq/Himadri than it is for other adolescents in the class. Are you like Tariq/Himadri?	No Sort of Yes Refused Don't know
2	Mehzabeen believes that the other adolescents in the class admire Mehzabeen. Are you like Mehzabeen?	
3	Arjuman is often first to answer the teacher's questions. Are you like Arjuman?	
4	Hanifa enjoys standing in front of the class and doing an exercise. Are you like Hanifa?	
5	Shonia is curious to investigate and understand new things. Are you like Shonia?	
6	Hashi likes to ask many questions. Are you like Hashi?	
7	Oishi enjoys learning new things at school. Are you like Oishi?	
8	Eva expresses himself/herself in class. Are you like Eva?	

Table A2: Growth Mindset Index

Item no.	Item statement	Answer options
1	If I study hard enough, I could be the most successful student in the class.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Refused Don't know
2	You have a certain amount of intelligence, and you really can't do much to change it.	
3	You can do things differently, but you can't really change the fundamental parts of who you are.	
4	You are a certain kind of person, and you really can't do much to change that.	
5	You can learn new things, but you can't really change your basic intelligence.	

Table A3: Grit Index

Item no.	Item statement	Answer options
1	I like schoolwork best which makes me think hard, even if I make a lot of mistakes.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Refused Don't know
2	Setbacks discourage me.	
3	If I think I will lose in a game, I do not want to continue playing.	
4	When I receive a bad result on a test I spend less time on this subject and focus on other subjects that I'm actually good at.	
5	I work hard in tasks.	
6	I prefer easy homework where I can easily answer all questions correctly.	
7	If I'm having difficulty in a task, it is a waste of time to keep trying. I move on to things which I am better at doing.	

Table A4: Malleability Index

Item no.	Item statement	Answer options
1	Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.	Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Refused Don't know
2	Music or drawing talent can be learned by anyone.	
3	No matter how intelligent you are, you can always change it quite a bit.	
4	Truly smart people do not need to try hard.	
5	If you're not good at a subject, working hard won't make you good at it.	
6	If I study hard enough, I could be the most successful student in the class.	



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About GAGE

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