

# Gambling Among Children and Youth in Rohingya Camps: Perceptions, Impacts, and Child Protection Concerns

October 2025

## 1. Executive Summary

This report presents research findings on the prevalence, impact, and perceptions of gambling addiction among children and youth in Rohingya refugee camps. Data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Surveys across six camps. The findings reveal a rising trend of mobile-based gambling with significant social, educational, financial, and mental health consequences. The community broadly perceives gambling as a serious threat, calls for increased awareness, alternative activities, and stricter controls to protect vulnerable populations.

## 2. Acknowledgement

This study on *Gambling Addiction and Community Perceptions in Rohingya Camps* was initiated as a decision of the Child Protection Sub-Sector (CPSS) SAG meeting and carried out jointly by Save the Children and BRAC.

We sincerely thank Anas Ismail (Save the Children) and Shanto Tanchangya (BRAC) for their technical leadership in survey design, methodology, and training of data collectors (with special thanks to BRAC for logistical support in the training). Equal appreciation goes to Mohammad Mostofa Feroz Bhuyan (Save the Children) and Bebek Kanti Das (BRAC) for their strategic guidance and management throughout the process.

Our gratitude also goes to the Child Protection field teams of both organizations for their dedicated data collection and to the community members, adolescents, and key informants whose voices are at the heart of this report.

## 3. Introduction

Gambling has become a critical concern in Rohingya camps, impacting children, adolescents, and adults. This study aimed to understand the severity of gambling addiction, how communities perceive it, and identify possible interventions to protect children and youth.

## 4. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a comprehensive understanding of gambling addiction. Qualitative data (FGDs and KIs) explored community perceptions, harms, and suggested remedies. Quantitative survey data, collected using Kobo Toolbox, captured direct gambling behaviors and impacts among children.

### 3.2 Data Collection

Camp	FGDs	KIs	Surveys	Total
Camp 2W	2	1	3	6
Camp 4	2	1	3	6
Camp 17	2	1	3	6
Camp 18	2	1	3	6
Camp 22	2	1	3	6
Camp 26	2	1	3	6
<b>Total</b>	12	6	18	36

- **FGDs (Focus Group Discussions):** Conducted with community members, including adolescent boys and girls, mothers, fathers, youth groups, and CBCPC members.
- **KIs (Key Informant Interviews):** Conducted with camp staff, volunteers, majhis (community leaders), law enforcement (APBn), and CP Camp Focal persons.
- **Surveys:** Targeted children aged 10–21 directly engaged in gambling activities to quantify behaviors, financial impacts, and personal experiences.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

- Qualitative data was analyzed thematically to extract dominant patterns and community sentiments.
- Survey data was analyzed quantitatively to measure prevalence, frequency, financial losses, and demographic trends.
- Triangulation of methods enhanced validity and depth of insights.

## 5. Findings



Figure 1: KII with Volunteer at Camp 4

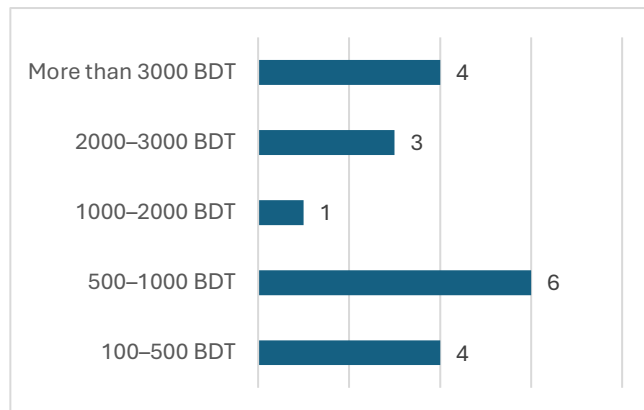
The findings from the assessment are organized into five clusters: Prevalence, Gambling Behaviors, Impacts, Community Perceptions, and Motivations. This structure allows us to capture not only how widespread gambling is among children and youth, but also the ways it manifests, the consequences it brings, how the community perceives it, and the underlying reasons driving the practice.

### 4.1 Prevalence and Participants

- Gambling is prevalent among Rohingya children and youth (10–21 years), with boys representing the majority of participants.
- Mobile-based games, online casino, sports betting, and card games are the most common gambling forms.
- Children typically learn about gambling through peers, community members, or family.

### 4.2 Nature of Gambling Activities and Behavior

- Participants engage in gambling activities daily or weekly, often spending from 100 BDT to over 3000 BDT per month.
- Money for gambling comes from personal earnings, family support, borrowing, or selling valuables including gold and mobile phones.



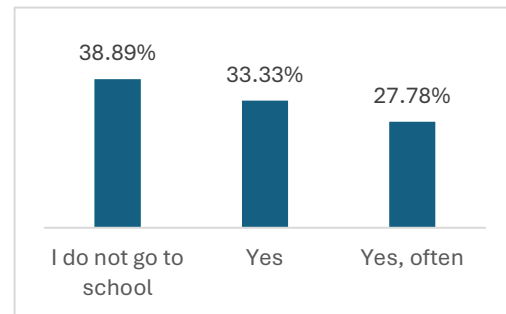
- Gambling occurs in shops, open fields, secluded camp areas, and homes where mobile internet access is available.

### 4.3 Impacts and Harms

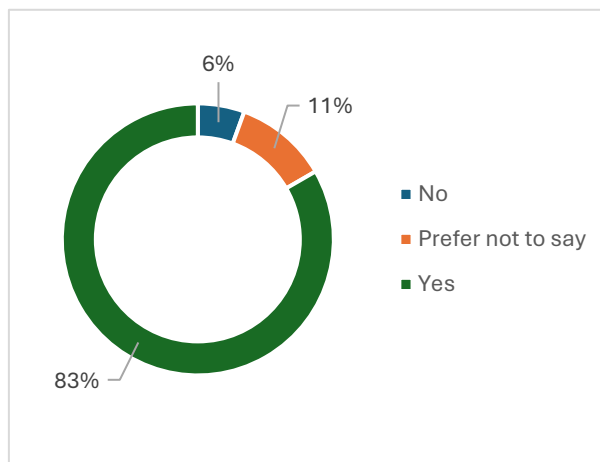
Gambling addiction among children and youth creates multi-layered protection consequences, as detailed below:

#### 1. Educational Disruption:

- While surveying children who were directly addicted to gambling, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of children responded that their school attendance was affected by gambling but majority of children were not enrolled in any formal education.
- Many children drop out or have irregular attendance because of gambling. FGDs with teachers, parents, and youth highlight children prioritizing gambling over education, leading to declining academic performance and increased dropout rates.
- Community members report that after experiencing losses, children become demotivated to continue school, increasing their vulnerability.

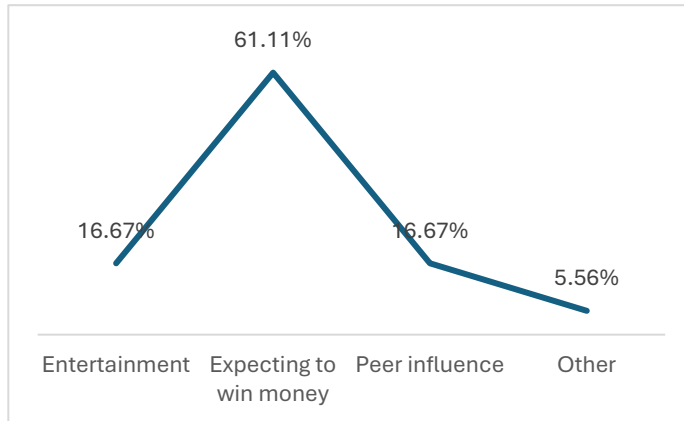


#### 2. Intensified Family Conflicts and Breakdown:



- Out of 18 children, 83% responded that they experienced financial loss due to gambling.
- Survey and KII data reveal family arguments, mistrust, and in some cases, permanent separation. Addictive gambling behaviors erode family bonds.
- Children sell valuables or borrow money without consent, fueling disputes and even domestic violence.

### 3. Financial Hardship and Deepening Poverty:



- When asked about their main reason for gambling, majority of respondents agreed that they expected to win money.
- Widespread reports from community leaders and parents indicate gambling losses directly impact family income, at times

pushing households further into poverty. Essential assets—including gold and mobile phones—are lost to wagering.

### 4. Mental Health and Emotional Distress:

- FGDs with adolescents and caregivers reveal rising anxiety, guilt, depression, and, in a few cases, suicidal ideation among gambling-affected youth. Participants express feelings of frustration when unable to stop despite efforts.

### 5. Social Disintegration and Increased Crime:

- When children were asked where they got the money for gambling, majority responded that they take from family, while one informed that he earns from drug peddling and then invests in gambling. Another informed that, he sold his mother's gold to arrange money for gambling.
- Community perception is clear: gambling breeds petty theft, lying, and dishonesty to fund bets. Reports from APBn and majhis note an uptick in camp crime and social tension attributed to gambling.
- Female caregivers and adolescent girls associate gambling with increases in domestic violence and abuse against women and children.

## Community Responses That Highlight Protection Concerns

- “চুরি বেড়ে যাচ্ছে, পারিবারিক অশান্তি বাগড়া বেড়ে যাচ্ছে, পড়াশুনায় ক্ষতি হচ্ছে, মানসিক চাপ বেড়ে যাচ্ছে, আত্মহত্যা এবং হত্যার প্রবণতা বেড়ে যাচ্ছে।”

— Adolescent Girls, Camp 2W



Figure 2: FGD with Adolescent Girls at Camp 4

- “সহিংসতা বাড়ছে, নারীরা নির্যাতন শিকার হয়, আর্থিক অসচ্ছলতা বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে, শিশুরা স্কুল-ড্রপআউট হচ্ছে।”

— Volunteer, Camp 4

- “My family members advised me to stop gambling, but I could not. I lost 5–6 Lac BDT and was separated from my family.”

— Survey Respondent, Camp 2W

- “হ্যাঁ শুনেছি ১৪ থেকে ২১ বছরের শিশুরা বেশি খেলা... সহিংসতা / নির্যাতন, সকলে এই বিষয়টাকে অপছন্দ করেছে।”

— APBn, Camp 22

These responses show a clear link between gambling and multidimensional protection harms, strengthening the weight of the findings and demonstrating the urgent need for comprehensive safeguards and support mechanisms.





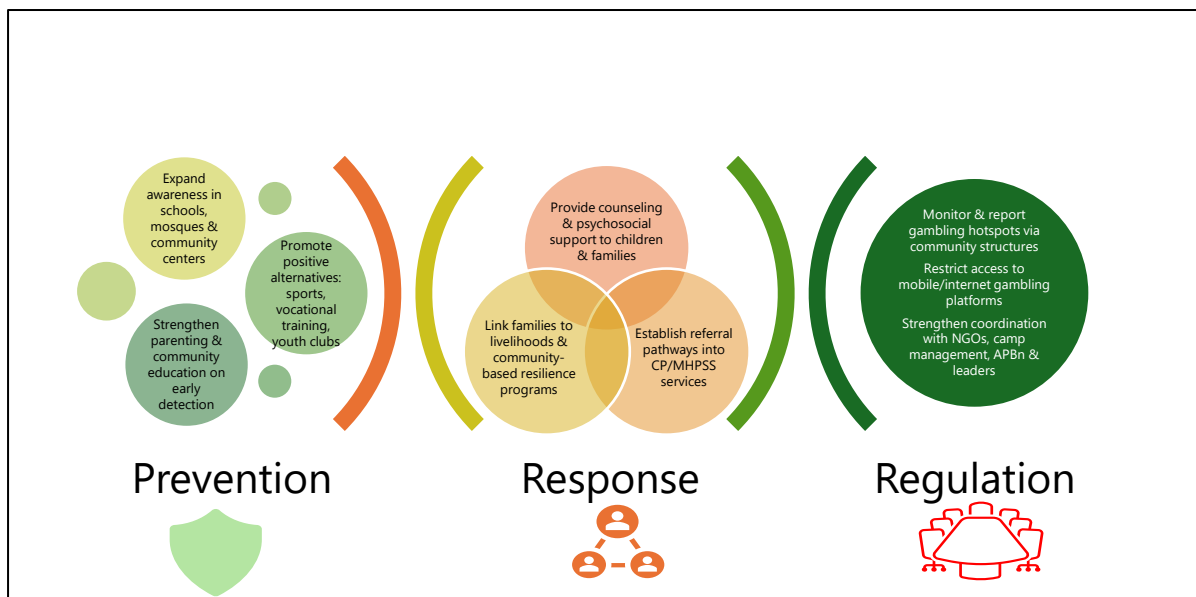
#### 4.4 Community Perceptions and Response

- Community views gambling as a growing threat and social curse exacerbating violence, abuse, and instability.
- Religious and community leaders, NGOs, and families promote awareness but face challenges due to secrecy, peer pressure, and limited enforcement.
- Despite advice received by children to stop gambling, many continue due to addictive cycles and hopes of recouping losses.

#### 4.5 Motivations for Gambling

- The predominant motivation is the expectation of winning money, driven by economic hardship and peer influence.
- Entertainment and accessibility of mobile platforms also contribute to the behavior.

### 6. Recommendations



#### 1. Prevention

- Expand awareness programs in schools, mosques, and community centers using interactive methods such as drama, posters, and peer-led sessions.
- Promote positive engagement opportunities (sports, vocational training, youth clubs, and recreation) to reduce idle time and peer influence.
- Strengthen parenting and community education on early detection of gambling risks and positive alternatives for children and youth.

## **2. Response**

- Provide accessible counseling and psychosocial support for children, adolescents, and families affected by gambling-related harms.
- Establish safe referral pathways for addiction cases, integrating with existing CP, MHPSS, and protection services.
- Support families in rebuilding resilience through livelihood linkages and community-based support networks.

## **3. Regulation**

- Enhance monitoring and community-based reporting of gambling hotspots in camps.
- Work with camp authorities, law enforcement, and religious/community leaders to enforce restrictions on mobile/internet-based gambling.
- Foster stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration (NGOs, camp management, APBn, Majhis, religious leaders) for coordinated enforcement and advocacy at policy level.

## **7. Conclusion**

Gambling addiction among children and youth in Rohingya camps is a significant and escalating child protection issue. Comprehensive interventions involving community awareness, regulation, support services, and policy action are urgently needed to safeguard children's well-being and futures.