

LANGUAGE GUIDANCE FOR RAKHINE STATE



EDUCATION

These Rohingya language guidelines provide cultural background and linguistic context for humanitarian program managers, field workers, and interpreters who work in education programs. They accompany the TWB Glossary for Myanmar, which contains more than 200 health- and education-related terms. It is available in four languages online and offline via mobile app in written and audio format.

glossaries.translatorswithoutborders.org/myanmar

We compiled and verified these terms through interviews and focus group discussions, complemented by desk research.



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and resources for communicating
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In the classroom

The Rohingya camps are a challenging and diverse language landscape. This is particularly true for education, where in every classroom you can hear several different languages. Young learners speak their mother tongue (for the vast majority, Rohingya), while teachers instruct in Rohingya, Rakhine, English, and Myanmar. In such a complex environment, it's important to consider community language and communication needs and preferences.

While the Rohingya community generally supports education for their children, cultural conservatism can limit access for girls past puberty. But the community does not have a consistent approach to this. Families from more rural areas are less likely to encourage girls to attend school than communities from urban Sittwe.

Religious institutions play a central role in Rohingya community life and socialization. Children learn Arabic and some Urdu at *moktab* (Islamic studies for young children) or *madrassa* (higher Islamic education). While these centers may teach reading and basic writing, they focus mainly on Islamic studies. Men and women have both completed at least some religious education, though women generally do not attend madrassas.

Shapes

Shape	English	Rohingya	Rakhine	Burmese
	Circle	Gulguilla	Sat wai	Sat wai
	Triangle	Thin kuinna	Tree gan	Tree gan
	Square	Sair kuinna	Saturan	sattuyan
	Rectangle	Lomba sair kuinna	Toun hman sadugan	Dunk man sa tu gan

Rakhine pronunciation

Rakhine is considered a dialect of standard Myanmar and uses the same script. However, pronunciation and vocabulary in spoken Rakhine differ from standard Myanmar. When Myanmar is taught to Rohingya children, it is often pronounced in the Rakhine dialect, as the Rohingya instructors themselves learned it. For example, the word for female teacher in standard Myanmar is *sayama*. In Rakhine, it is pronounced "sarama." The word for the number zero is *thunya* in Myanmar, and *thunra* in Rakhine. This can be confusing for students and could lead to communication difficulties.

Measuring with feet sticks:

The influence of English

The English language has a long history of official and educational use in Myanmar, a former British colony. Even now, English is taught as a second language. English words were, and still are being absorbed into the various languages of the region, including Rohingya. Some English words are directly borrowed into Rohingya, with small pronunciation changes. For example, school is *eshkul* and class is *kelas*. Some academic terms, like *konsunan* (consonant) and *bowal* (vowel) are also directly borrowed from English, though teachers use their Myanmar counterparts (*bhee* and *tha ra*, respectively) more often in the classrooms.

Other Rohingya terms were influenced by English, but are not direct translations. For example, the word for a measuring ruler in Rohingya is *fit-haim*. *Fit* is from English “feet”, and *haim* is the Rohingya word for “stick”. The back translation of the Rohingya would be “feet-stick”.

Considering the presence of English-speaking NGOs in the camps, the use of English and the creation of new English-derived terms will naturally increase.

Days of the Week

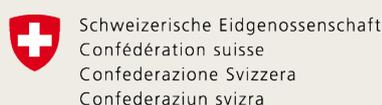
English	Rohingya	Rakhine	Burmese
Sunday	Roibar	Talongganing ning	Taninganwe
Monday	Shombar	Talonla	Taninla
Tuesday	Mongolbar	Ong ga ning	Inga
Wednesday	Budbar	Budahoo ning	Boddahu
Thursday	Bishibbar	Kra tha pa dee ning	Kyathabade
Friday	Shukkurbar	Thout kra ning	Thoukkya
Saturday	Shonibar	Saning ning	Sanay

Talking about math

Though the Rohingya language has words for numerals, mathematical concepts are usually expressed in standard Myanmar. Words for addition (*pong*), subtraction (*annok*), multiplication (*amrok*), division (*assa*), fraction (*appaing king*) and similar words are all direct borrowings from Myanmar. Though shapes have Rohingya words, they are often taught using Myanmar terms.

English	Rohingya (no written numerals)	Rakhine	Burmese
0 zero	sifir	thun ra	၀ thunya
1 one	ek	tite	၁ tit
2 two	dui	hnait	၂ ni
3 three	theen	thone	၃ thone
4 four	sair	lay	၄ lay
5 five	fās	ngaa	၅ ngaa
6 six	so	kraut	၆ chout
7 seven	hāt	ka-night	၇ khun-ni
8 eight	āshto	shyte	၈ Shi
9 nine	no	go	၉ ko
10 ten	dosh	dasay	၁၀ ts-say

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