



Rohingya emergency in local newspapers

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Burmese, Gregorian, Islamic Hijri, Bangla: Which calendar Rohingya people use in everyday life.

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WHAT MATTERS?

Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin

Issue 03 × Wednesday, April 18, 2018

BBC Media Action, Internews, and Translators Without Borders are working together to collect and collate feedback from communities affected by the Rohingya crisis. This summary aims to provide a snapshot of feedback received from Rohingya and host communities, to assist sectors to better plan and implement relief activities with communities' needs and preferences in mind.

The information in this edition includes insights from local Cox's Bazar newspapers; as well as information collected through conversations with affected individuals, community focus group discussions and live radio phone-in programmes on Bangladesh Betar and Radio Naf, which are supported by UNICEF.

The work is being delivered in partnership with IOM, the UN migration agency, and is funded by the UK Department for International Development.

The Rohingya crisis: A dialogue with the host community on their challenges, worries and solutions

The Cox's Bazar station of government radio broadcaster Bangladesh Betar is producing monthly community discussion programmes that allow host communities to ask questions of local officials and experts. The latest programme was recorded in Cox's Bazar town with around 40 local people and broadcast on the 31st of March.

Participants raised concerns about several issues during the programme. The main topics of discussion raised by local people were:

- What measures government and development agencies are taking to support host communities – participants felt they had also been heavily affected by the Rohingya crisis.
- Concerns that teaching Bangla in camps may lead to Rohingya people being able to leave the camps and enter mainstream society more easily.
- Worries, particularly among women, about the possibility of marriage between Rohingya women and local men.
- Concerns that many school and college going students are taking jobs with NGOs working as part of Rohingya response. The participants felt that this was having an impact on the overall education sector in Cox's Bazar and wanted to know the government's plans to address this.
- A feeling that transportation costs have risen substantially in the local area.



A date with confusion: dealing with four different calendars

The following socio-linguistic findings and analysis are based on data collected through focus group discussions, disaggregated by gender, language and age, as well as complementary field and desk research.

Rohingya people use four different calendars, which poses an interesting communication challenge in this response:

-  The **Bangla** calendar is used for everyday life, including when talking about weather and seasons.
-  The **Gregorian** (western) calendar is used in Bangladesh and Myanmar for administrative and official purposes .
-  The **Islamic Hijri** (lunar) calendar is used for religious holidays and ceremonies, and for certain religious documents, like marriage certificates.
-  The **Burmese** calendar is used in Myanmar for some official documents.

To communicate effectively with the Rohingya people it is important to understand how they use these calendars within their community.

Though many Rohingya people can refer to the Gregorian calendar, they are more comfortable using the Bangla and Hijri calendars for daily and religious purposes. The situation is further complicated because the four calendars don't coincide. For example, the month of *Boishakh* in the Bangla calendar starts halfway through the Gregorian month of *April* and at the end of the Hijri month of *Rajab*. A simple statement like, 'We will distribute food at the end of the month' can potentially be very confusing.

A date with confusion: dealing with four different calendars



What does this mean in the field?

While humanitarians use the Gregorian calendar for their planning, they should avoid using it when working with the community. If possible, try to express dates in the Bangla or Hijri calendars instead.

Community members may refer to different calendars, depending on the subject they are talking about. Women and older people are more likely to refer to the Hijri and Bangla calendars, whereas males or more educated people may use all four calendars.

For example, in mid-May, the onset of high temperatures will coincide with the beginning of the Islamic Hijri month of *Romzan* (Ramadan). When discussing the weather, the community may use the Bangla Calendar month of *Jyoishto*, *Zer*, or *Zet* (in Bangla, Chittagonian, or Rohingya respectively) to discuss challenges related to high temperatures during this time (for example illnesses related to the heat), but they may use *Romzan* (*Hirji* calendar) when discussing the challenges of fasting.

It is therefore important to communicate clearly when referring to potentially ambiguous time periods.

Culture and calendars

The weather, accompanying sociocultural practices, and health concerns are deeply intertwined with the Bangla calendar. Both Rohingya and Chittagonian speakers describe weather patterns in terms of the month(s) they occur. These observations are reflected in many seasonal folk remedies and local Rohingya proverbs, such as:

Shon'or zoré dhon baré.

Shrabon's rains increase wealth.

Bhado maashot kuñir faul aw.

In Bhadro, dogs become crazy (related to rabies).

Maag maashot baag guzoré.

In the month of Magh, even tigers shiver.

Chittagonian speakers also use the Bangla calendar, and both Rohingya and Chittagonian speakers derive the names of the months from Sanskrit via Bangla. This shared calendar shows the similarities in how these communities observe their year, particularly seasons and weather patterns.

It is important to note that some standard Bangla names for the months are quite different to those used by Chittagonian and/or Rohingya speakers. And while the names for most months appear to be similar in both Chittagonian and Rohingya, they may differ in pronunciation.

Bangla calendar months

In Bangla	In Chittagonian	In Rohingya	Gregorian calendar overlap
Boishakh	Boishek	Boishak	April – May
Jyoishto	Zer	Zet	May - June
Asharh	Ashar	Ashar	June - July
Shrabon	Shown	Shon	July - August
Bhadro	Bhado	Bhado	August - September
Ashshin	Ashin	Ashin	September - October
Kartik	Hati	Hati	October – November
Ogrohayon	Awn	Awn	November – December
Poush	Foosh	Foosh	December - January
Magh	Maag	Maag	January - February
Falgun	Fawn	Fawn	February – March
Choitro	Soit	Soit	March – April

Data was collected through focus group discussions, delineated by gender and language (Chittagonian or Rohingya) as well as complementary field and desk research.



Rohingya people need info on extreme weather preparation and nutritious food

Feedback from listening and discussion groups over the past two weeks suggest that Rohingya people remain worried about upcoming extreme weather. Some new concerns are also emerging about health and nutrition support for pregnant women.

Demand for health facilities and nutritious food

People in the Rohingya community feel that the number of babies being born in the camps has increased recently. Moreover, the community have noticed that a lot of women are currently pregnant and believe that they need additional medical care. People also felt that pregnant women were not able to access proper nutrition. They noted the importance of nutrition for pregnant woman and younger people in the community; but felt that relief items currently being distributed did not include a sufficient amount of nutritious foods; and requested more food items that could fulfil the nutritional needs of pregnant women.

“ WFP provides us with rice, lentils and other things. But we are not getting any nutritious food like vegetables, which are important for a pregnant woman.”

- Female, Balukhali camp

Hygiene and disease concerns build ahead of extreme weather

The Rohingya community also remains concerned about the effects of hot weather during the upcoming period.

The community strongly associate the upcoming summer heat with heavy, uncomfortable sweating. There are worries that they will feel uncomfortable because they will not be able change and clean their clothes every day. Some people perceive a link between sweaty clothes and a risk of contracting contagious skin diseases; and are worried about these spreading easily through physical contact.

“ We have no extra clothes to wear. We are wearing the same clothes during sunshine and rain. Sweating causes itching across the whole body as we cannot change our clothes regularly. We are getting different skin diseases because of this.”

- Female, Balukhali camp

Newspaper Review Summary

21st to 26th March 2018

A snapshot analysis of 19 daily Cox's Bazar newspapers, for the period 21-26 March, highlights that one of the principal topics of local concern has been repatriation. A total of eight newspapers have prominently reported that Myanmar has put fences, bunkers and landmines along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Some referred to the Washington Post, which stated that the recent activities of Myanmar in the border area has the potential to deteriorate relations between the two neighboring countries. Five newspapers reported Rohingya people as saying that, under the existing situation, it would not be possible for them to go back to Myanmar.

Crime was also a top subject in the local newspapers during the analysis period. Eight of the local outlets reported on a BBC investigation which claimed that young Rohingya women are being targeted by foreigners for sexual purposes. Besides this, a report about five Rohingya men being arrested with knives

was published in seven local newspapers; and five outlets published news of the Rapid Action Battalion seizing a large amount of rice, pulses and blankets intended for relief in Modhurchora camp, Ukhiya.

The Chinese ambassador's statement about the complexity of the Rohingya situation was also widely reported, with six newspapers covering the story about China wanting to play an effective role in the repatriation process.

News about political unrest in Myanmar, caused by the resignation of the country's President, was covered by three newspapers, including fears that this could hamper the potential repatriation process. Three newspapers specifically reported that people of the Rohingya community were also concerned about these issues.

Issues related with the host community also continued to be reported by the local newspapers. Six outlets published stories of local people's suffering due to the Rohingya influx; and claimed that sympathy towards the displaced Rohingya community is declining as the local people struggle to cope with the situation. The reports said that the host community feels that they are getting very little, if any, attention from humanitarian actors.

Three of the local newspapers ran prominent stories about water, claiming that 16 million litres of water are being consumed every day by the Rohingya community; and that water in the region is becoming increasingly scarce. People are concerned about the upcoming dry and summer season, the reports claimed. Three of the local newspapers also published reports regarding the concerns of

the Rohingya community related to the risks in the upcoming summer and rainy season. Three newspapers reported claims by some Rohingya people that some Pakistani Moulvis (Islamic scholars) are secretly distributing money in Kutupalong camp during the night. Reports said that some of the local leaders (Majhi) are involved in this process; and That this kind of incident is increasing day by day.

Theme	Number of times the issue was mentioned
Rohingya influx and repatriation	21
Crime committed by Rohingya people	21
Environmental and economic degradation	19
Biometric registration of Rohingya people	6
Mismanagement of relief distribution	6
Action for host community	4
Disease outbreak and lack of health care service	4
Guideline for NGOs Issues by Government	4
Distributing money among Rohingya people by Pakistani nationals	3
Corruption of NGOs	3

Newspapers used to produce the above summary –

Daily Ajker Cox's Bazar, Daily Gonoshongjog, Daily Shokaler Cox's Bazar, Daily Doinondin, Daily Inani, Daily Ruposigram, Daily Rupali Shoikot, Daily Shomudrokontho, Daily Cox's Bazar 71, Daily Aponkontho, Daily Ajker Deshbidesh, Daily Bakkhali, Daily Himchori, Daily Shagar Desh, Daily Amader Cox's Bazar, Daily Cox's Bazar, Daily Ruposhi Bangla, Daily Shoikot, Daily Cox's Bazar Bani.