

Daily challenges faced
by Rohingya women

Find out more on page 1

Rohingya community feedback:
Non-food items & shelter

Find out more on page 3

Daily challenges faced by Rohingya women

Source: Community feedback collected specifically from Rohingya women by IOM, ACF and ActionAid Bangladesh from camps 1E, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8W, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 25 (N=6,977) from October 2018 to January 2019. In addition, focus group discussions were conducted with Rohingya men and women in camp 2 to explore these issues more in depth.

While life in the camps is difficult for everyone, community feedback shows that Rohingya women face particular challenges on a daily basis. This article brings together findings from community feedback and focus group discussions to profile a day in the life of a Rohingya woman.

A Rohingya woman's day starts by waking up very early in the morning. The lack of toilet facilities, and the fact there are not separate toilets for men and women, means that women try to use the latrines and the bathrooms very early in the morning, as they tend to be less busy. However, there

are usually some people already in the queue, and women feel shy standing in the same queue as men to use the facilities. Moreover, toilets often become unusable as they get filled up quickly with the number of people using them. Women have to take a male family member with them if going to the toilet at night, because the toilets are usually some distance away, and they cannot go alone in the dark.

“ I feel shy to use the toilet when a man is using a toilet nearby. So, I need to wait until he leaves so that I can use it. The number of toilets needs to be increased.”

– Rohingya woman, 25, camp 2

While men in some households have tried to cope with the situation by digging a hole close to the house, or using one corner of the house as a latrine in case of emergency, these options are not available for the women to use. The lack of female-only bathrooms in the camps means that women face challenges bathing and keeping themselves clean.

After freshening up, Rohingya women complete their regular morning prayers (*Fazr*) and then go to collect water for drinking and domestic use. The water sources are often far from their houses, and they have to stand in a long queue

Key findings from quantitative data analysis –

- 48% of feedback received from women was about relief related issues. The majority (33%) of feedback was about not receiving, or losing relief cards, and 26% was about women who had not received adequate non-food items.
- 27% of feedback received from women related to WASH, with 44% of that feedback around issues related to water.
- Of the WASH-related complaints from women, 17% were requesting a hygiene kit.
- The need for hygiene kits appears to be highest in camp 23 (where 98% of WASH-related feedback was requesting a hygiene kit), camp 19 (52%) and camp 10 (40%).

WHAT MATTERS?

Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin
on Rohingya Response

Issue 22 × Wednesday, March 20, 2019

to collect water, as the number of tube wells is low in the camps. Sometimes they send their children to collect water. As a result of the challenges in collecting water, women have said they use less water than necessary to take a shower and to wash utensils. Purifying water to drink is difficult for them as they have only been given small bowls and containers, despite having requested bigger containers. They also feel the water tastes bad because of the tablets they use to purify it.

Returning home from collecting water, the Rohingya women have to start cooking food for their family members which comes with another set of challenges. Most of the Rohingya women don't have access to a gas stove, and they usually cook using clay stoves. Lack of firewood means they often cook by burning dry leaves and plastic which they have collected. But burning these materials makes their eyes burn and the smoke sometimes makes them feel sick.

“ We use plastic and dry leaves as an alternative to firewood. It burns our eyes and fills the house with smoke.”

– Rohingya woman, 22, camp 2

Because of the lack of open space, they need to cook inside their house, which is the same space they use for eating and sleeping. Besides, they do not have enough cooking utensils, which means it takes more time to cook food. As a result, they cannot give enough time to looking after their children.

Having enough food to cook for their families is a struggle for some. Although some Rohingya women are happy with the amount of relief

goods they receive; others explain that the amount of rice they receive has decreased, and is no longer enough.

“ The amount of food we get from relief is not enough. Even if we eat less, we hardly can eat for 23 days and the remaining 7 days we starve.”

– Rohingya woman, 22, camp 2

Some women say that they lack pots and plates, which means their family members have to eat one after the other, and they can't eat altogether at the same time. Some also mentioned that cooking food sitting on the ground causes health risks for the women as well. Moreover, they mentioned that they don't receive meat and fish, which affects their family's health. Women cook potato chop (fried, mashed potato), egg or *shutki* (dried fish) received as relief goods as an alternative to try and console their children, who sometimes cry for fish and meat.

After cooking and feeding the children, some of the Rohingya women send their children to a learning centre. They feel concerned about the safety of their children, and are worried they might get kidnapped, or go missing. They have heard that five children were reported murdered by the local people, which is why some Rohingya women don't allow their children out of their sight.

They usually have a rest after lunch before starting to prepare the dinner. After lunch they sometimes chat with the other Rohingya women in the block after their afternoon prayer time (*Asr*). They usually have some free time until their evening prayer (*Maghrib*). Many of the Rohingya women said that they would like to

earn some money by sewing during their spare time, but they don't have any sewing equipment, or any light to sew in the evenings.

After the evening prayers, they have their family time. At the end of the day, women have their dinner and sleep after the final prayer of the day (*Isha*). They prefer going to sleep early and waking up early, as at night there is no electricity, and everything remains dark.

These daily struggles are even more challenging for Rohingya women when they are menstruating, and they need an adequate number of pads, clothes and soap. Women aged 15-24 mentioned that it is difficult to maintain hygiene for a number of reasons. First, they have to go to the toilet wearing a burka. Secondly, they don't have enough soap as they can't use the same soap to wash themselves and to wash the cloths they use as sanitary pads. Thirdly, they do not have enough space to dry the cloths, which usually take at least two days to dry. Sometimes they wear the half-wet cloths again, which can lead to health issues.

“ During menstruation cycle, I face a lot of problems to dry our cloths as the space is small. It takes around two days to dry these cloths. Sometimes I wear the half-wet cloths which results in health issues in our private parts.”

– Rohingya woman, 18, camp 2

Some women try to get help with these health issues at the nearby medical centres, but they do not feel they get proper treatment, and sometimes the medical centre staff ask the patients to leave if they find a long queue in front of the centre.



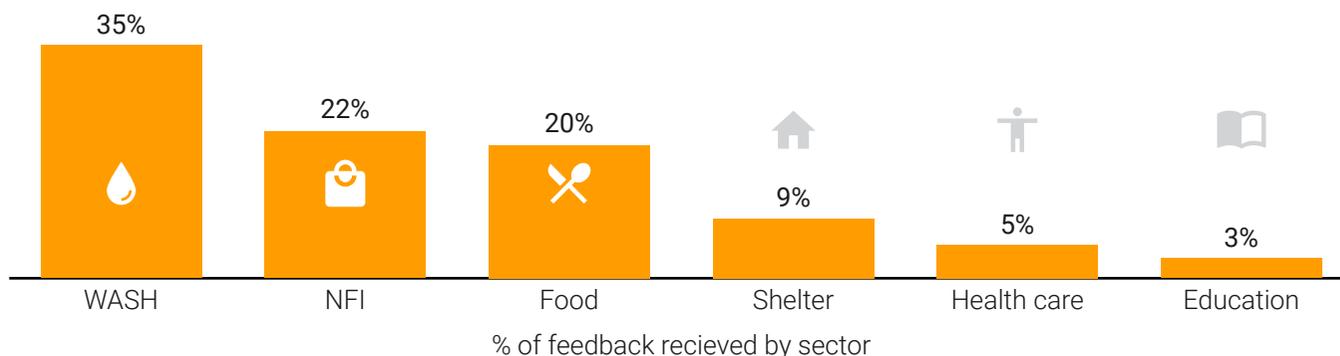
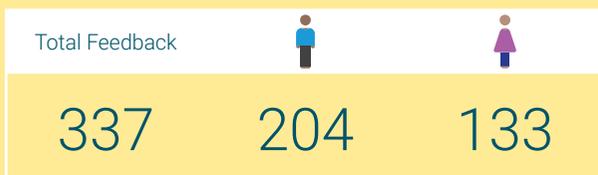
Rohingya community feedback:

Non-food items & shelter

Source: Feedback collected between January 31 and February 18 by the Internews feedback collection team in camps 1E, 1W, 2E, 2W, 3, 4 and 4-extension using the KoBo Collect app. In total, 337 interactions were analysed and, of the top five issues identified, NFI and shelter were selected for further analysis for this issue of What Matters?. There were a total of 65 interactions specifically about shelter and NFIs. To explore the identified issues in depth, BBC Media Action conducted four focus group discussions (two with men and two with women) in camp 2. Feedback is collected in the Rohingya language using English and Bangla scripts.

Internews

January 31 – February 18, 2019



Rohingya community's concerns about shelter and non-food items

Community members that provided feedback in the first two weeks of February expressed concerns relating to the quality and supply of construction materials for shelter and to non-food items (NFIs). The main shelter and NFI-related concerns include:

- Shelter construction supplies do not provide adequate protection from harsh weather
- Materials have degraded and need to be replaced
- Additional items such as solar batteries and fans are needed
- Inadequate supply of soap and clothes
- Capacity of many shelters is not proportional to household size

According to Rohingya community members, shelter kits distributed in most camps include bamboo and polythene tarpaulins and these materials do not efficiently insulate their shelters from cold temperatures and wind during harsh weather. Securing shelters against the wind with current provisions is particularly challenging and refugees described how gusts of wind can rip through tarpaulins and break bamboo structures. Recent feedback indicates a rise in concerns related to preparations for the summer, which starts in March.

Community members who have lived through last year's summer seasons are apprehensive about their ability to regulate temperatures and get adequate shade in the upcoming hot season.

“ Our houses have become very weak. We have not yet received any bamboo and plastic sheet. The four sides of the house are broken down. At night, a lot of wind enters the house. We are not able to sleep at night due to cool weather...”

– Woman, 35, camp 4

Feedback collected from women respondents shows that they consider the conditions in the upcoming hot season will be even harder for them. Women rely on the privacy and space their shelter affords them to carry out some activities like prayers. The roofing used in many shelters does not insulate or reflect heat well and they say that the ‘unbearable’ high temperatures during the day make it difficult for them to stay inside.

“ We are very concerned because the hot season is coming. During the hot season, we can't stay under the plastic sheet roof of the house. We can't offer prayers at the right time because the house becomes hot. It will be very good if you can inform it to any NGO.”

– Woman, 85, camp 1W

Insects, wear and winds have degraded components of shelters in several camps, according to the community. There are concerns that the bamboo used to make the shelter frames has insect and water damage. Rohingya respondents suggested that new distributions of bamboo and tarpaulins to replace deteriorated materials would help them prepare for the coming hot season and allow them to make their shelters structurally sound. In addition, a female respondent from camp 1W suggested that it would be helpful if solar batteries and fans were provided. Currently, fans are not being provided for personal shelters in the camps.

“ We are concerned about the small size of our houses. When we were provided with a house, a family which has 7 members was given the same size small house as a family with 3 members...”

– Man, 55, camp 2E

Shelter size for different households was mentioned as an issue in a number of camps. Community members with shelter and NFI concerns, especially ones with larger families, reported getting the same size shelters as smaller families. Household size and the amount of available space typically determine the size of shelters. Not having adequate space for all family members can create conflict and safety issues. The need for adequate accommodations for larger households has been

mentioned for several months and many families are concerned by inaction on this and fear that they will not get the space they need for their families.

“ ... When we first came here, the army gave us some clothes inside bundles... The clothes we brought wearing on our body here have become weak and torn. If we take a bath, first a person uses the cloth and when it is dry after his/her bath, another person can take a bath wearing it. We don't have any additional clothes and we face problems even performing prayers... The clothing we wear regularly has become so useless and torn that we can't go outside wearing it. I don't have any other clothing to wear. We have such problems with clothes...”

– Woman, 40, camp 1W

Recent feedback in the camps focused heavily on urgent NFI needs. Distributions of many NFIs have been inconsistent according to the community and this has made life difficult. In some cases, it has also impacted on mobility in the camps. Clothing, soap and utensils were the most requested items. Rohingya community members described the challenges that they faced meeting basic needs without an income. Many reported that the clothing and other NFI supplies they have are worn out and won't last much longer.

Respondents stressed that clothing was particularly important to them as it allows them to maintain modesty and ensures that women feel comfortable when they go outside. Many women requested *thami* (a traditional dress with skirt and blouse) which is what they are accustomed to wearing and is suited to the climate. Previous distributions of unsewn cloth and older clothes did not sufficiently meet the needs of the community as many were not able to tailor the clothes themselves and could not afford to pay someone to sew these for them.

“ ...We got some bath soap and laundry soap from an NGO and CCDB. So, at that time, we could keep our body and clothes clean. We are affected by different kinds of skin diseases as we are not able to take bath and wash clothes properly due to the lack of soap...”

– Woman, 35, camp 3

Several Rohingya people shared the difficulties they are having washing clothes and maintaining personal hygiene with inconsistent soap distributions. In camp 3, women expressed concern over not having soap to wash their clothes for extended periods. Other requests for NFIs focused on the need for cooking utensils and dishes to facilitate meal preparations that many women are not able to buy themselves because they do not earn an income.

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

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions regarding *What Matters?*, you are welcome to get in touch with the team by emailing info@cxbfeedback.org