

Rohingyar Hobor: Faani Uda (Rising Waters)

Edition 2: April to July 2021

Rohingyar Hobor (Rohingya news) is a trend report produced by IOM Needs and Population Monitoring and Communication with Communities. Its objective is to better understand the Rohingya's welfare in the camps and their perception and recounting of recent events that affect their lives. These reports draw upon qualitative and quantitative data collected from twenty different sub-blocks across Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion as part of a longitudinal research exploring welfare through Rohingya's access to assistance, economic conditions, and relationships within the response.

Rohingya continue to discuss the impacts and significance of the fires that occurred in the first half of 2020. While the number of fires decreased as time has gone on, there remains concerns about whether there will be a reoccurrence following the monsoon season. Heavy rains during the monsoon season and the reduction in maintenance and preparedness works caused widespread flooding in the camps. According to NPM daily incident monitoring, 160,422 Rohingya were affected by monsoon rains that caused waterlogging, flash flooding and landslides/slope failures over the last four months. Prior to large scale flooding between 27 July - 2 of August, camp residents extensively discussed the deterioration of shelters, damaged pedestrian infrastructure, increased landslide risks and blocked/broken drainages as their most serious concern. Interviews reveal increased frustration and contempt towards humanitarians for what camp residents believe were preventable disasters caused by a lack of action and pre-monsoon preparatory activities. Many residents believe humanitarian's failure to complete these works led to increased flooding and landslides, but historical rainfall data does show this as a period of significant rainfall since the 2017 influx.

The COVID-19 mitigation measures implemented by the government and national lockdown also put serious pressure on camp residents and affected their ability to seek services, medical treatment, and work opportunities. Many were inhibited from moving within camp boundaries or leaving the camps to seek services. The general perception that camp conditions have deteriorated continues to spark conversations over repatriation, whether through formal or informal means. In addition to this this edition noted significant decreases in welfare across the population in both surveys and interviews notably with respect to three key metrics:

Assistance:

- Reduced humanitarian presence and programming, reduced mobility and heavy monsoon rains hindered access to critical assistance with many respondents reporting reduced access to a wide range of services.
- Closure of essential services, such as protection, nutrition, registration and MHPSS services.

Economy:

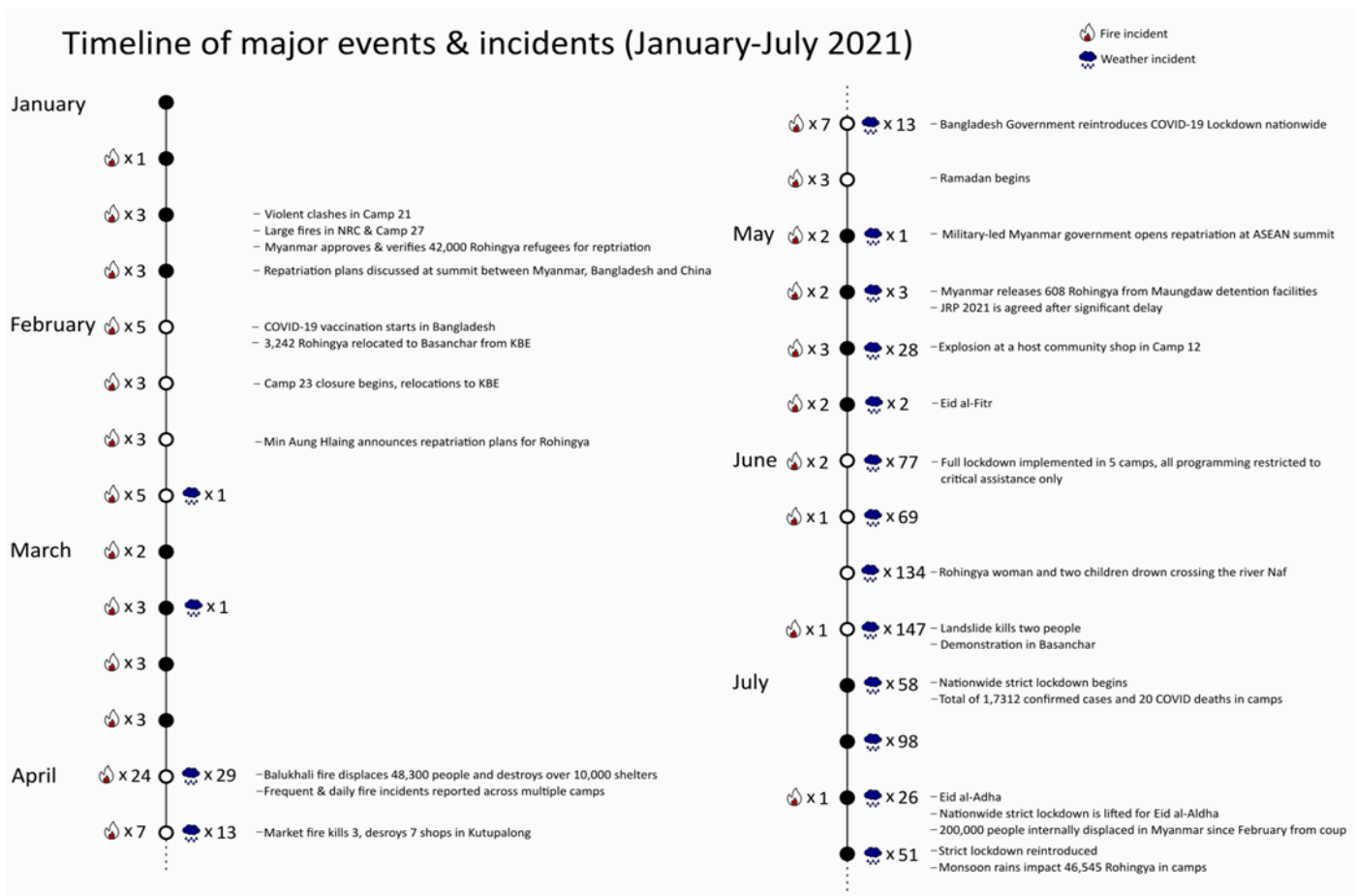
- Limited and reduced earning opportunities due to movement restrictions within and outside the camps. 42% of households reported not having an income in the last four months.
- Inflation in local markets within and outside the camps.
- Closure of shops, cessation of Cash for Work programs & volunteer opportunities due to COVID-19 mitigation measures.

Relationships:

- Continued deterioration between host & Rohingya relationships over competition of resources, exacerbated by nationwide lockdown.
- Exacerbated tensions between Rohingya and affected population over perceived failure to conduct mitigation works.
- Continued problems between humanitarians & affected population. A total of 9% of respondents reported seeing humanitarian responders behaving badly, abusing, or harassing a woman or girl within the past three months.
- 57% of households witnessed arguments and verbal altercations in their area between April and July, with 41% of those witnessing incidents occurring within their own sub-block, 17% with host community and 13% between armed groups.

Methodology

The information in this report reflects the overall indicative findings of mixed methods collected by Rohingya researchers between the 14th of June to the 15th of July from 20 purposively sampled blocks from camps 1E, 1W, 3, 6, 7, 8E, 8W, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. The sub-blocks and camps were purposively selected to ensure different population densities, physical access, facilities, presence of host community, and social differences such as place of origin. In each of the selected sub-blocks, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted at the community level with the Shomaz committee, along with 2 open-ended semi structured household interviews and around 12 quantitative household interviews. All data was analysed according to the overarching analytical framework. Qualitative data was analysed with IOM CwC analysing the qualitative data using framework analysis on NVivo software and quantitative data was cleaned and analysed by NPM. An extended methodology note is available on request that more fully explains the approach undertaken in this report.



The infographic above shows major events that occurred between January and July 2021. The fire icons represent the number of individual fire incidents, and the rain cloud icons represent the number of small-scale weather-related incidents recorded by the SMSD Sector's daily incident monitoring mechanisms ran by NPM across all camps by weeks. The incidents relating to traffic or infrastructure incidents are not included. Please see methodology of incident tracking mechanism here which includes definitions of the different incident categories.

Context Update and News

The impact of monsoon, risk of large fire incidents and reintroduction of strict lockdowns in the camps especially, loss of movement between camps, the closure of shops and markets and reduction in income opportunities were the most common topics being discussed by participants. The overall perceived deterioration of the living conditions in the camps has also resulted in the continuation of discussion regarding repatriation.

Monsoon:

At the end of July, heavy monsoon rains led to windstorms, waterlogging, flash flooding as well as landslides/slope failures across 30 of the 34 camps. This major event directly impacted over 46,500 individuals, displaced over 17,600 people and killed 8 people.¹ A combined total of 6,000 shelters were either completely destroyed or partially damaged and in need of urgent repair.² Heavy rains are compounding an already fragile situation caused by COVID-19 containment and mitigation measures. The risk of landslides, poor shelter conditions and deteriorating pedestrian infrastructure because of monsoon seasons was raised in the majority of qualitative consultations conducted and were a common topic of discussion amongst the community even before July and the aforementioned flood response.

As a result, many families point out that the limited shelter support, limited maintenance of drains and slope protection work prior to the heavy monsoon rains as contributing to the negative impact. This has led to a general perception that humanitarians and the COVID-19 containment and mitigation measures are partially to blame for the associated damages of the rains. Many people are frustrated and feel that their complaints and concerns were ignored for many months prior to this event and now their shelters have been severely damaged, and they have been displaced as result of the heavy rains. There is a general sentiment across the camps that humanitarians failed to take action to prevent the flooding and landslide incidents—with some households commenting that they have “shared their problems many times” and did not receive assistance in stabilizing the plot of land their shelters were on or support to repair their shelter that was already leaking before the monsoon rains started. A family from Camp 10 who lost a relative in a landslide caused by the recent heavy monsoon rains reported that humanitarians were to blame for the death of their family member. Because they had complained many times about their shelter’s risk of a landslide.

"How can we live in this dirty and crowded place when the monsoon season has arrived. Water from one shelter is falling on another shelter. It's sinking into the shelter and damaging it. Because it's rained so much, the walls are covered in insects. The whole shelter gets wet when water enters through the damaged sections."

(Camp 15 FGD with Shomaz Committee)³

Despite the decrease in fire incidents in comparison to the previous three months, the fear and anxiety of another large-scale fire incident similar to the scale of the Balukhali fire on 22nd of March remains a concern for the households and communities consulted. Many report that their household and members of their community are still having trouble sleeping. They self-initiated fire prevention measures, such as informal night watch groups. Many are concerned for their safety as small-scale fire incidents are still occurring during the rainy season which makes the next dry season an extreme concern. When compared to the same time period last year (January to June), there were 46 more fire incidents in 2021 than in 2020.⁴

"Everyone is thinking for the last three months about the fire that broke out in Balukali. They are worried and asking why fires are occurring in different places all the time. People are guarding their blocks at night because of the fires. After the fires happened, some people said, "we didn't experience this much violence in Myanmar. We are facing more and more violence here". Because of this, some people are asking to be put on a list to return to Myanmar and some others have already returned to Myanmar. Some others are moving to Basanchar Island under the stress."

(Camp 11 FGD with Shomaz Committee)

¹ ISCG, Flash update #4 on monsoon response of 11 August 2021, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/20210808_iscg_monsoon_response_4_final.pdf

² SMSD Sector's Daily Incident Monitoring Mechanism ran by NPM: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=1eec7ad29df742938b6470d77c26575a>

³ Noting that this FGD like all those that are quoted throughout the report were conducted prior to heavy monsoon rains at the end of July

⁴ SMSD Sector's Daily Incident Monitoring Mechanism ran by NPM: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=1eec7ad29df742938b6470d77c26575a>

Reintroduction of Strict COVID-19 Containment and Mitigation Measures:

A minority of consultations relate to people's fears of COVID-19, reports of increased illness in the camps, and the experiences of people in quarantine. Despite these concerns, there are far more discussions about the mitigation measures being utilised to contain the spread of the virus and the secondary impacts that those measures create.

A full lockdown of the camps 2W, 3, 4, 15, and 24 and COVID-19 programming restrictions were reintroduced on 20th of May due to an increase in positive cases. This included a tightening and increase in COVID-19 containment and mitigation measures across all camps. Only activities that were considered "critical/life sustaining" by the Government of Bangladesh were permitted. Movement restrictions is the most discussed challenge of the COVID-19 containment measures for those consulted. The restriction of movement between camps was enforced by suspending tom-toms and rickshaws used by camp residents as public transport from operating in camp boundaries and creating checkpoints within the camp and having a serious impact on the overall welfare of the population.

"People also face difficulties reaching the main road as there are many checkpoints in different places of the camp. Sometimes they are not allowed to go out of the camp. Even when we have to take a patient to somewhere out of the camp we need to carry them over our shoulders. And we have to carry our food assistance with porters because no vehicles are allowed to enter the camp. Most of the people are trying to go back to Myanmar because there are too many checkpoints everywhere. Some of them died in the sea while crossing the border."

(Camp 10 FGD with Shomaz Committee)

"Does COVID-19 only affect Rohingya people, doesn't it affect Bangladeshi people? If it's only affecting Rohingya, let's keep Rohingya separately. Even though Rohingyas are kept separately, COVID-19 is occurring inside Rohingya camp. Cars are stopped and shops are closed inside the camp. Buses and cars are allowed to drive on the main road where people are crowded... The camps are also overcrowded like a local market. We don't know why camp 15 is announced lockdown."

(Camp 15 FGD with Shomaz Committee)

Repatriation:

Opinions about repatriation are not uniform. However, the continued perception of deteriorating camp conditions has led many Rohingya to question if they will ever be repatriated or receive justice. Many respondents continue to feel unwelcome and unsafe because of increased measures to contain and control Rohingya refugees within Bangladesh. These feelings are growing alongside an increasing desire to return to Myanmar. As people's hope for the future decreases and the living conditions deteriorates, more Rohingya report a willingness to undertake risks to leave the camps. A minority of those consulted discuss those who have attempted to return to Myanmar and died in the crossing of the Naf river. This is commonly used as an example by those consulted to explain the deterioration in conditions and desperation felt amongst the community.. Some community leaders express that while they want to return as soon as possible many do not want to return until their safety and rights can be assured in Myanmar -- they do not want to repatriate only to flee again in the future.

"Some Rohingya are swimming across the Naf river saying that it is better to live as a beggar inside our own country than live here. Many people are dying while they try to cross the Naf river because they cannot share their painful story to anyone. It has been four years since we came here and we want the global community to return us to our country. We are hoping that we can return safely with our family if we are taken back... We heard that a total of four people died and their dead bodies are floating down the river."

(Camp 15 FGD with Shomaz Committee)

Changes to Welfare

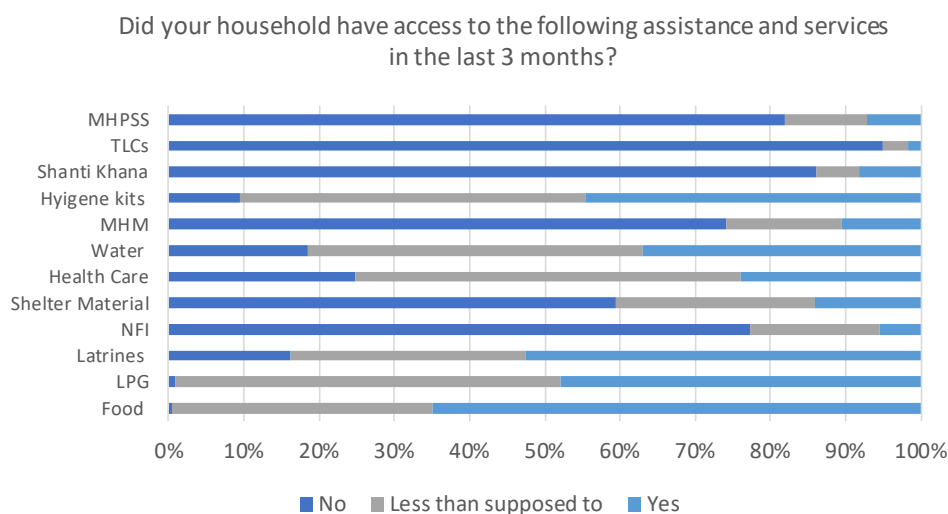
Between April and July, those consulted reported a reduction in their welfare in terms of their access to assistance, household economy and relationships.⁵

COVID-19 containment and mitigation measures in the camps and national lockdowns created acute covariate shocks and stressors that impacted all households and communities in the study. These measures resulted in a loss of access to income and livelihood sources, inflation in prices inside and outside the camps, and created increased competition for resources between Rohingya and host communities. The continued restriction and impact of the monsoon have also deteriorated access to critical assistance, such as food assistance, water, shelter and health care. Households are also continually deprived of formal education, self-reliance activities, and formal governance services that are continuing to impact mental welfare and the populations' ability to create and maintaining safe and supportive social environments.

Overall households were more likely to be better off and have better welfare if they had a source of income, did not require expensive medical treatment for their family, or received shelter assistance. Access to income continues to be the largest determinant of welfare and provides households coping capacity. Households that lost their income, already had large debts preceding April 2021, had a family member fall ill or experienced other events that require capital to recover were forced to make increasingly hard decisions and rely on negative coping to survive. Negative coping mechanism such as borrowing from relatives, selling assistance, or leaving the camps in search of income have become either increasingly ineffective or no longer possible. This has pushed many households into more extreme measures such as selling labour in advance, skipping meals, begging, attempted self-repatriation, joining criminal groups and resorting to criminal activity.

Access to Assistance

Welfare of people in the camps is strongly dependent on their access to the lifesaving and life sustaining assistance and services that are provided by humanitarian. Between April – July, COVID-19 mitigation and containment measures and the monsoon floods hindered humanitarian access into the camps, reducing people's access to various services and assistance and negatively impacting Rohingya refugees' welfare. The below graph outlines households' perceived access to various assistance and services over the last three months with many people reporting reduced access to various services. This is largely due to COVID-19 programming restrictions because the Government considered many of these services and assistance not "critical". The most accessible services and assistance were those that the Government considered critical, such as food assistance, LPG, water, latrines and hygiene kits.



Food Assistance: The return to value-based e-voucher system from commodity voucher system⁶ has increased satisfaction and access to food assistance in comparison to last year. However, many households report still struggling to access the amount of food that they need to last the whole month⁷, and many households in qualitative consultations report a lack of food diversity as they desire more access to fresh vegetables, fruit, fresh and meat. Larger households in particular report running out of food before the next distribution and having to employ negative coping mechanisms to meet their basic food needs.

⁵ Please see extended methodology note for more information on how basic welfare is conceptualised and see the analytical framework developed for this study.
⁶ From April 2020 until the latter end of 2020, Rohingya refugees were receiving set monthly packages of food through commodity e-voucher, and fresh food corners and farmers markets were closed. Now the vast majority are receiving value-based e-vouchers where they have more freedom to choose their rations. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000118104/download/>
⁷ This is supported by various studies that have been conducted over the last 12 months also see WFP, 2021, REVA 4, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/bangladesh-rohingya-emergency-vulnerability-assessment-reva-4-april-2021> and IOM, ACAPS, 2021 'Our Thoughts' https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/our_thoughts_-_acaps_iom_2021.pdf

"We are eight in my family. You can see my data card. We are very thankful to humanitarians for providing us rations but the rice and gas is not enough for us. The suppliers deduct 159 taka for one bottle of oil. They deduct 100 for 1kg lentils that costs 20-25 taka outside. So, we don't have enough rations... Two small packs of dried fish cannot be enough for us. The dried fish taste bitter and are too expensive as well. They are so bitter that you cannot eat them if I cook for you."

(Camp 1W household interview)

LPG: Half of households reported receiving less LPG than they need— especially for larger households of more than 8 members. In qualitative consultations, there are increasing reports of damaged gas stoves which households are struggling to get fixed with humanitarian support. Those that run out before the next distribution or cannot fix their broken stoves must then purchase more LPG or pay for stove repairs by using their savings, going into debt, cooking at someone else's shelter, or seeking alternative fuel sources such as firewood – all of which have been difficult given the camp-wide lockdown. Cost of transport and travelling between camps to collect heavy LPG bottles and other assistance was also reported as a challenge by responders with camp lockdowns reducing the availability of transport and increasing the cost of the transport that remains operational.

"It's difficult to go get our rations because we can't get transportation. We have to go very far away to get our rations and need to go there by car. If we go by car, we arrive and return early. We are hearing that lockdown has been started in the camp. I don't know exactly whether it's true or not. The car can travel in some places and not others. My son must carry the gas tank on his shoulders or I have to put it over my waist if there is no car. It's difficult. Now, the car charges double the fees. Before lockdown, the car used to charge 20 taka to go from the relief distribution point to gas distribution point. Now it costs 20 taka to go only half of the way. Then, we need to walk for some distance and take another car for 30 taka to reach to the distribution point. We need a total of 50 taka to reach to the gas distribution point with an empty tank. We then need 100 taka to pay someone to help carry the gas tank back to our house."

(Camp 18 household interview)

WASH: Access to water and latrines remains a serious issue for many households. For 19% of households reported extreme challenges to accessing water and another 16% of households reported similar access challenges for latrines. The majority of these reports came from Camps 1W, 6, 9, 8W, and 16. Due to the drastic reduction in humanitarian presence and the impact of monsoon seasons, 29% of households reported their access to water has decreased between April and July, and 27% of surveyed households reported reduction in adequate access to latrines.

Health: The most commonly reported illnesses over the past 4 months reported through Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS) were Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), diarrheal diseases and unexplained fever.⁸ According to the WHO situation report covering 5-18th of July, there was at least one confirmed Cholera case across 16 different camps in Kutupalong Balukhali Expansion.⁹ The report also highlights an increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases – with 184 cases reported in week 28 with a test positivity rate of 14.8%, in comparison to the 123 confirmed cases in week 26, with a test positivity rate 10.0%.¹⁰ Through community and household discussions, those consulted report that children in particular over the last four months have been affected by seasonal diseases, including skin diseases, chicken pox, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Reports of fever and diarrhea in adults and older persons are also commonly discussed at community and household level. People are reporting increase in insects and rats in shelters and leaky roofs as causes of health problems. An increase in mosquitoes combined with a lack access to mosquito nets is resulting in an increase in concerns over dengue and other diseases.

"I had to sell gold to get medical treatment for my children when they were ill. After Eid, all of my children were ill. I went to the humanitarian health facility to get treatment for my children but they didn't recover with the prescribed syrups. At the same time, my wife was ill too. Who will take care of children and cook? Should I cook or take care of my children? I didn't get work either on those days either so I sold that gold."

(Camp 1W household interview)

⁸ <https://www.who.int/bangladesh/emergencies/Rohingyacrisis/ewars>

⁹ camp 1E, 1W, 2E, 2W, 3, 7, 8E, 8W, 9, 10, 13, 17, 18, 20, 20 extension and Kutupalong Registered Camp.

¹⁰ WHO, July, Rohingya Crisis Situation Report no. 14: Weeks 27-28, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/who-cox-s-bazar-situation-report-14.pdf>

Official reports of illness may be underreported. Because between April and July, access to the health care was reported as challenging due to movement restrictions, continued distrust in health facilities and the prevalence of COVID-19 in the camps caused confusion regarding whether the health care services were open for those with non-COVID-19 related illnesses. In total, half of household respondents (51%) believe that they have less access to adequate healthcare than they need and 25% report no access to adequate healthcare services. Some believe that the health facility in their area is not open due to COVID-19 restrictions. Transportation to large clinics was extremely difficult for family members with sick relatives. Many people described carrying patients' long distances because there was no tomtoms available during COVID-19 restrictions and having to negotiate their way through various checkpoints when traveling between the camps to reach the large primary health clinics or hospitals. In addition, seeking permission to leave the camps to access more specific treatment or more specialised diagnosis in the large hospitals in Cox's Bazar was reportedly more difficult and expensive because of the lockdown.

Resultingly, all research locations reported that there were people going into debt to ensure their access to private clinics that they believe will help them. Only 22 out of the 243 households surveyed reported not spending any money on medication within the reporting period (see economy section).

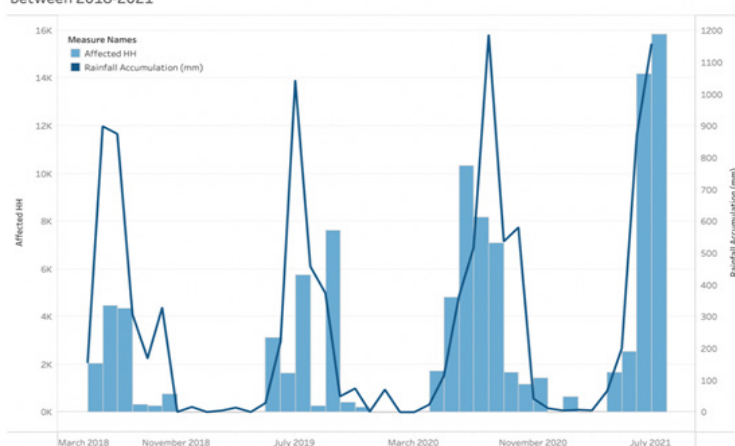
*“Every resident of the camps needs medicines. Most clinics are closed due to COVID-19 and lockdown. People cannot fulfill their needs. The existing clinics are also not enough. They send us back by giving two paracetamols. We human beings have a soul. No one want to die. We are not allowed to go out of the camp to take treatment.”
(Camp 1E FGD with Shomaz Committee)*

Shelter & Site Development: Over the last four months, shelter and public infrastructure conditions across all surveyed areas reportedly deteriorated due to a lack of maintenance works and distributions. The combination of monsoon, use of temporary materials like bamboo and tarpaulin and the camp lockdown¹¹ has resulted in increased damages to shelters and infrastructure. Under the COVID-19 mitigation and containment measures only emergency responses to shelter and site development damage were permitted with certain exemptions applied to the fire affected camps 9, 8W and 8E that are being rebuilt. COVID-19 restrictions also hindered monsoon preparedness activities preceding the 2020 and 2021 monsoon season.¹²

The Site Management Site Development (SMSD) Daily Incident Report records the impact of small-scale weather-related incidents, including slope failure, flooding, lightning, and windstorms across the camps. Between the 1 April and 31 July 2021, 1,727 small-scale weather-related incidents affected 34,435 households resulting in 21,925 partially damaged shelters, 2,123 completely damaged shelters – more than 10,000 shelters than the previous year¹³.

Despite the continued increase in the number of affected households each year as result of small-scale weather-related incidents, the 2019, 2020 and 2021 monsoon seasons are within normal range for monthly cumulative rainfall, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department. Although observed rainfall in July 2021 was higher than July 2020 and there was increase in the number of low pressures recorded, April to July in 2021 was also classified as 'Normal'.¹⁴ Though a classification of "normal" does not reflect the intensity of the rainfall events, if damages reported between the 27th to the 31st of July were removed, there is still a higher number of affected households reported between April to July 2021 than recorded in the same period in 2018, 2019 and 2020. There have also been comparable incidents of heavy rains recorded in previous monsoon seasons that did not record the level of impact as the most recent event. Therefore, shelter damages cannot solely be attributed to heavier than average rainfall and may be due to other reasons.¹⁵

Monthly rainfall accumulation and number of household affected by small-scale weather-incidents between 2018-2021



11 Common pre-monsoon preparedness activities that could not be completed at scale are activities that include reinforcement activities such as strengthening and repairing shelters, drains, and roads, slope failure mitigation initiatives, and distributing tie-down kits and providing technical follow up, training and preparedness messaging.

12 RRRRC May 2020 <http://rrrc.gov.bd/site/notices/63c9dff7-e7a9-4975-b43b-5553ae4b461a/Restricted-Programme-in-Light-of-Covid-19-Letter-No-749>, and SMSD, IOM and ACAPS, August 2020 https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200820_acaps_report_impact_of_the_monsoon_covid-19_containment_measures.pdf

13 From May and July 2020, a total of 24,435 households were impacted by 1,021 small-scale weather-related incidents with 21,925 partially, 2,123 totally damaged shelters.

14 "Normal" in climate terms is the Long Period Average (LPA) of rainfall over a location, using 30 years or more of rainfall data for the region (measured at a station). A classification of normal does not indicate the intensity of the rainfall. There can be high intensity rainfall over a short period of time followed by dry spells which may still result in a Normal classification.

15 Average rainfall for 2019, 2020 and 2021 is based on analysis by UNDP's DRR project using Bangladesh Meteorological Department rainfall data and Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System. https://instant.rimes.int/seasonal_forecast/202108

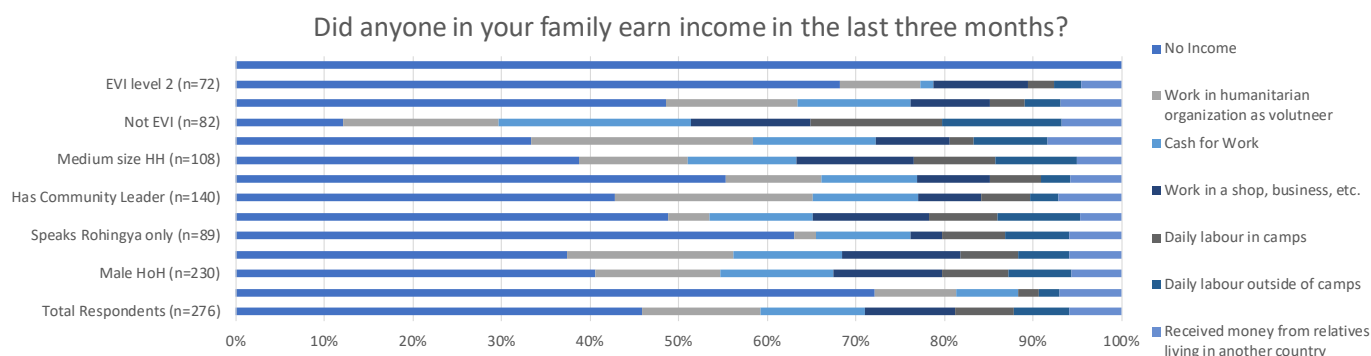
It is likely that the impact of small-scale weather events and the overall impact of the monsoon in 2021 has been magnified because of the continued use of temporary shelter materials that are not consistently distributed, deterioration of slope conditions after four years and the reduction in monsoon preparedness activities. In interviews, Rohingya attribute the shelters deterioration to the reduction in humanitarian support and an increase in slope failures over successive years of rainfall. Over half of the surveyed households (59%) report not receiving shelter assistance and another quarter of household (26%) report receiving less than they required. In an attempt to protect their families and ensure they have somewhere safe and dry to live, 78% of surveyed households report spending money to repair or improve their shelter between April and July 2021.

Protection, Education, & MHPSS Services: The major programs that the Government of Bangladesh do not consider “life saving” such as livelihood programs, Gender Based Violence (GBV) programs, safe spaces, MHPSS activities, and education services have been suspended. Temporary Learning Centres (TLCS) have been closed since the beginning of the pandemic in Bangladesh in April 2020. Children and adolescents who cannot afford to pay for private tutoring from Rohingya teachers in the camps have been without education for almost 18 months. The loss of access to education, skills development and livelihood programs impacts households’ economy. But households and community report that it also greatly impacts their mental wellbeing, because they lack purpose and cannot see a future for their family and the future generations. Households value education so much that many have reported skipping meals and going into debt to ensure some of their children can attend informal tuition sessions based on the Myanmar curriculum run by other Rohingya in the camps or in religious-based educational institutions.

“From the rations I receive, I sell rations for three people. I do not want to ruin my children's education. Tuition fees have to be paid. 400 taka has to be paid to the school and 300 taka to another place. Educated people know the value of education. I somehow manage to run my family with these difficulties.”
 (Camp 7 household interview)

Economy

The COVID-19 containment and mitigation measures have severely impacted household access to income sources and the nationwide lockdown has led to inflation within local markets. In the last four months, the restrictions have resulted in a decrease in opportunities to work for humanitarian organisations because of a cessation to cash for work programs and a reduction in daily work opportunities due to movement restrictions. Movement restrictions have further reduced people’s ability to seek other income generating opportunities, worsened negative coping strategies and contributed to general inflation. Of the 243 households that were surveyed in July, 42% of household respondents had no access to income since April 2021. The households which had access to income were more likely to be households containing members that can speak a language in addition to Rohingya, had a male head of household, were a community leader, and were larger in household size. The majority of respondents earned income through work with humanitarian organization as volunteers or cash for work participants. Only 37 household, had more than one income source and almost all of households contained had at least one member with a high school education or above. Over half of households with an income source reported a drop income over the last three months, with only 25% of households reporting consistent earnings over the last four months¹⁶.



¹⁶ See extended methodology note for the categorisation of different households based on their demographics.

During interviews, many household heads explained that people lost income between April and July, because of the reduction in humanitarian operations in the camps. In contrast, respondents from camp 8E, 8W and 9 reported an increase in opportunities with humanitarian operations scaling up in response to the fire. The rebuilding of the affected area has resulted in an increase income generating opportunities in these areas.¹⁷ Strict movement restrictions with numerous checkpoints and the decrease availability of transport prevented Rohingya from moving between the camps and hampered households' ability to seek income generating activities outside their camp. The fence surrounding the perimeter continues to prevent many Rohingya from travelling to the host community to buy and sell essential items and work.

"There is no work. Few of the educated people get some work to earn but there is no work for illiterate people. We are being provided with lentils and rice and no one wants to eat the same things every day. When people want to eat fish and meat they need money. That is why people want to work. WFP offers some work but 50% of the working wage is being paid as cash and the remaining 50% have to be taken as vegetables or rations from WFP distribution point. We get a bottle of oil for 150TK, but when we want to sell it to make it cash, we have to sell it for 90TK. The rice and oil provided by WFP is enough so we buy the oil with extra money we have rations and then sell these again. Actually, earlier I did manage to find work and earn money so that I can feed my children with fish, meat and vegetables, but now it has been difficult to earn any money."

(Camp 6 FGD with Shomaz Committee)

In addition to movement restrictions, the RRRC has implemented restrictions on stores and markets operating in the camps.¹⁸ Interviews reveal that police and armed police continue to enforce store closure and remove shops in compliance with COVID-19 containment measures. The Balukhali Bazar, a major market hub in Camp 9, has also not reopened since the fire. The closure of these shops and markets has greatly impacted income generating opportunities for market vendors and small shop owners while also reducing the surrounding households' access to markets and contributing to the inflation of prices for essential items in other stores.

"Three months earlier, I was able to sell things easily. Due to the lockdown, people don't have income and humanitarians can't come here to work, so I don't benefit much from the shop. It's making it difficult for me to live. It's monsoon season, so the situation isn't good and there is heavy rain and wind. It is more difficult for us to live than before."

(Camp 18 household interview)

Shop owners whose shops remained opened also explained that their income has drastically reduced and many have had to sell their shops because they have been unable to restock their supplies due to market inflation caused by an increase cost in the transportation of goods into the camps or local markets. There are also reports of increased cost of wholesale goods purchased from the host community by store owners; because the host community has also been subject to increased transportation costs and inflationary pressure. These reports are corroborated by WFP's monthly market monitoring for April 2021 which reported similar findings with regards to challenges faced by vendors while also identifying an increase in prices of key food commodities¹⁹.

Many respondents are unaware of the inflation that is occurring outside of the camps, across Bangladesh, and as a result attribute the inflation of prices to the host community adding a tax to the wholesale goods and trying to "rob them" by charging increased amounts to import items and purchase wholesale goods.

"In the last three months, our community has gotten less assistance than before. We have to buy items at higher price at the food distribution store since the prices have been raised. For example, our rations lasted two weeks before and now they are only lasting one. They aren't providing us any extra rations and we are getting less because of higher prices and a lower amount of balance per month. Humanitarians keep sending money but the shop owners sell the items at higher prices. That's why we are getting less assistance."

(Camp 3 FGD with Shomaz Committee)

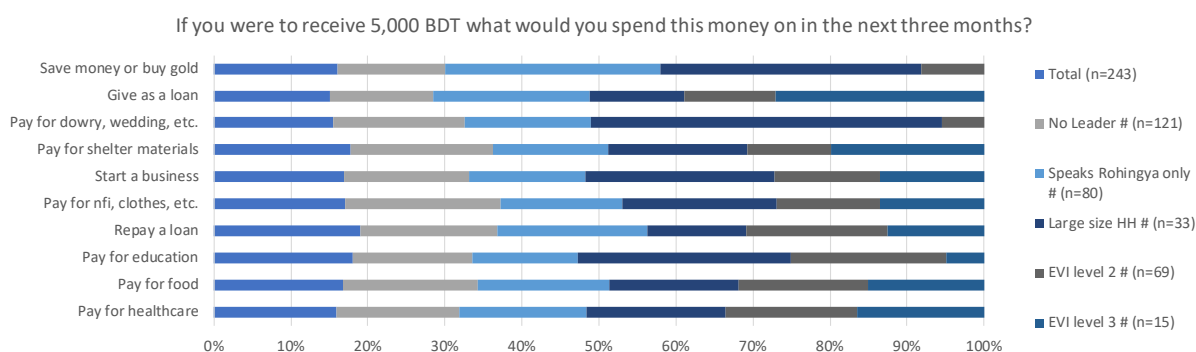
¹⁷ ISCG, March, Joint Needs Assessment, https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/final_jna_report_300321.pdf

¹⁸ RRRC 2021 COVID-19 Restrictions <http://www.rrrc.gov.bd/site/notices/89cba225-16c1-41af-bc24-e1eb88fd3775/30-06-2021-Restrictions-on-overall-activities-and-movement-to-prevent-spreading-of-19-WFP,2021,> April Market Monitoring, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-bangladesh-coxs-bazar-market-monitor>

Expenses

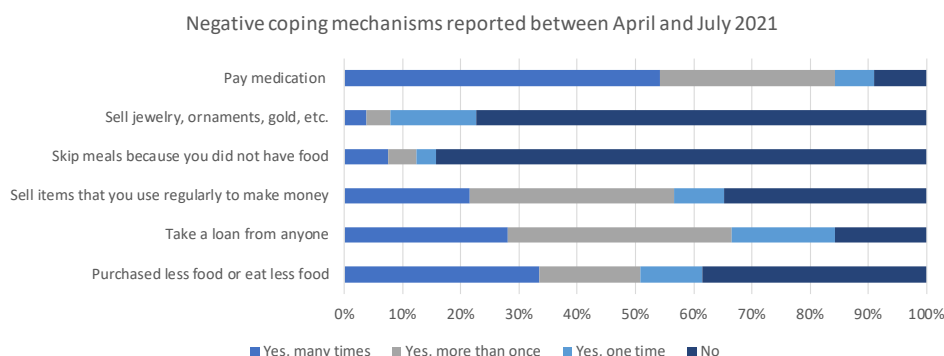
The increase in cost of items combined with a decrease in the access to income generating opportunities has greatly impacted households' purchasing power and has led many households to purchase items on store credit without the ability to repay their debts. Despite the increase in difficulty in accessing markets and the reduction in purchasing power, the need for households to purchase essential items, such as additional food, medicines, shelter materials, household items and education, has remained throughout the lockdown. Almost all households surveyed (91%) report paying for medication at least once since April 2021 with households of more than nine members reporting greater needs for medication than smaller households. Market closures and movement restrictions have also meant that families struggled to purchase their medication in pharmacies or seek adequate healthcare outside the camps.

When respondents were asked what they would spend 5,000 BDT on over the next three months, 77% of surveyed household stated they would pay for healthcare, 67% would buy additional food, and 49% also said they would pay for education for their children.



Negative Coping Mechanisms

The COVID-19 mitigation and containment measures have greatly reduced the effectiveness of existing negative coping mechanisms and increased the impact of shocks and stressors. The most commonly utilized coping strategies are taking loans from family, neighbours or friends, selling rations and household items for money, reducing food purchases and/or food consumption, taking store credit and selling labour in advance. The below graph shows frequency of negative coping mechanisms used that were captured in the quantitative surveys.²⁰



Households with lower levels of education and without income were statistically more likely to use more extreme coping mechanisms such as eating less food or purchasing less and skipping meals. Households with an income and higher education levels were more likely to report more positive economic behaviours such as paying back loans, and spending money to repair their shelter.

²⁰ Changes to future around of the quantitative interviews will be made which aim to capture a more comprehensive picture of coping mechanism in the households selective for reoccurring interviews.

"In the last three months my family's income decreased. It's because I couldn't earn any money through work. I used to make at least 300 to 500 daily before. Nowadays I can only earn 100 taka. I need to borrow 200 taka from others for daily expenditures. If I cannot settle my debts I will have many problems. No one who I can borrow from is rich. We have no land to repay our debts. Everyone will lend me money if I have 300 or 500 taka income. Now, no one is lending me money because I have no income. So, I am facing difficult."
(Camp 15 household interview)

The movement restrictions, closure of markets and continued reduction in income generating opportunities meant that households struggled to borrow from relatives or neighbours, because of the overall reduction in earning and reduction in value of sold relief items. Many households are caught in an endless cycle of borrowing where they must keep borrowing money from new sources to pay back previous debts. Many of these households had large debts preceding the reintroduction of strict lockdowns or have experienced a large idiosyncratic shocks or stressors during the reporting period, such as a family member falling ill and requiring expensive treatment, or shelter damage from rainfall that requires repair.

"I don't have gold to sell. My daughter got married one year ago. I took a loan one year ago, and I can't repay it yet. I repaid the loan by taking another loan. For instance, I took a loan from you, and when I can't repay you I took loan from another to repay you. I have been doing this for one year."
(Camp 7 household interview)

"I have to take a loan to take treatment because different kinds of diseases affect us in the camp. When we go to local hospitals it costs 1,000-3,000 taka accordingly. So, we cannot cover this with our income. If there was quality treatment in the camp, we would not take a loan. So, we have tension because we can't change how treatment is given. From who can we take loans? I take from friends if they have money. I have to settle loans by selling some rice. We sell valuable things. There are no other valuable things except rations in the camp. We sell rations for emergency problems when we need. What happens? Even though we do not have enough after we sell our rations, I borrow some rations from others and return it after getting rations next month. We are surviving like this, otherwise what will we do."
(Camp 14 household interview)

Many respondents report that when they collect their rations and need to sell some items to purchase other essential items, they feel forced to sell their items for a lower price than they would have gotten if they could sell to others in the camps or outside of the camps – further reducing their power as consumers with increase in prices and decrease in worth of rations.

"We try and sell our things after we bring them home. We can't sell them at good prices because we are forced to sell them at lower prices by the host community. The host community bring permission from high government that allows them to buy what we are given in the camps. So we can't get good prices for the past three months. We can't eat like we did before. Because of the market agent, we have a hard time with out livelihoods more than before. We want the market agent stopped as soon as possible. People are facing a hard time because of him. We have no way to report about them and nobody forbids him from doing this. So, people are worried about it."
(Camp 16)

Relationships

The last four months have seen a deterioration in the security of the camps and placed a continued strain on household and community social relationships. As need for resources and income increases in both Rohingya and host communities because of economic pressures from the lockdown, tensions between the two populations are reportedly rising. This combined with movement restrictions and a reduction in humanitarian presence has resulted in deterioration of the security environment where theft, assaults, gender-based violence, bribery, corruption and other crimes are perceived to be increasingly common.

Physical Violence & Mental Well-being

The increased protection risks resulting from the fragile security environment has affected the psychological welfare of Rohingya households. While 86% of respondents report no incidents of threats or physical violence against anyone in their household, 8% of respondents report experiencing threats or physical violence with most of these reports concentrated in two sub-blocks of Camp 18 and Camp 6. In contrast, 24% of respondents reported witnessing physical violence occur in their area between April and July. Households with community leaders, volunteers, or teachers, or households that have members that speak languages in addition to Rohingya were more likely to report seeing these incidents than other households. This is possibly due to increased interaction with the wider public and disclosure bias, suggesting that more educated households or households with more social capital are more likely to report witnessed violence. Another 29% of respondents stated there had been incidents of theft in their community in the last 3 months.

Another 39% of households reported that their family members have been unable to sleep peacefully over the last three months, with most households reporting this due to shelter conditions (59%), criminal gangs operating in their area (15%), and risk of theft/robbery (8%). The deteriorating shelter conditions during monsoon seasons have left households afraid that heavy rain and strong wind will destroy their shelter. Those in low lying areas or in landslide risk areas reporting high levels of anxiety as their family members are at risk of severe injuries or death. Shelters constructed with temporary materials add to this insecurity and make households feel more vulnerable to break ins because the walls of their shelter are not strong enough to prevent robbery. All these contributing factors impact people's ability to sleep at night and feel safe.

Evidence for how security can be improved through shelter assistance was revealed in Camp 12, where residents recently received new shelter materials. These households reported that their shelter is now better able to withstand the monsoon weather conditions and they reported that their shelters are now safe from theft:

"Mashallah, we are better than before. Before, the shelter was weak. Recently, an NGO provided us with a pillar of cement, tarpaulin, and flat bamboo sheet... Before, it was a tarpaulin wall. [Now] it is bamboo wall. We lived with fear. Mobiles and other things were stolen. Many thieves stole from us by cutting our tarpaulin shelters. Now, because an NGO provided us stronger shelters with double tarpaulins, we can live easily... Why do you think it is better than before? We appreciate NGOs for giving us strong shelters... We can sleep soundly again with all of our family members."

(Camp 12 household interview)

Protection agencies report that this security environment has resulted in spontaneous unapproved relocations of households trying to move to locations where they feel safer.²¹ However, on the other hand the fear of social separation and distrust in authorities has also resulted in families refusing to relocate or evacuate even if they are in danger. In the lead up to and during the floods, many families that are at risk of landslide or flooding were too afraid to relocate. Some families were worried that they might end up staying in temporary communal centres with inadequate facilities for 2-3 months. Other families are concerned that relocations may be permanent, and they may be moved out of their camp away from their family and close social connections. Interviews also reveal incidents of forced relocation of households at risk by camp authorities with support from the police and humanitarian actors. These actions caused many Rohingya to be afraid to approach humanitarian actors for assistance because they were worried about forced relocations or a reduction in assistance should they refuse to relocate. As a result, many families preferred to self-relocate to relatives households temporarily.

Relationship with Humanitarians

Households' relationship with humanitarians suffered because of the COVID-19 mitigation and containment measures. The reduction in humanitarian presence means that many households reported little to no interaction with humanitarian responders and a general lack of awareness about which agencies are working. The majority of respondents (60%) reported humanitarian behaviours as "okay." However, 20% of respondents reported humanitarian behaviour as worsening over three months since April 2021. In addition, 9% of respondents reported seeing humanitarian responders behaving badly, abusing, or harassing a woman or girl within the past three months. Households with a community leader or family member that can speak a language other than Rohingya were more likely to report a deterioration in humanitarian behaviour. Almost half (45%) of respondents had made a complaint about services in the last three months. Households who spoke Chittagonian or English were more likely to submit complaints. However, 56% stated that their problem was not resolved and another 30% stated that they are still waiting for a response. The inability to respond to household complaints and the reduced humanitarian presence and operational access has contributed to a general deterioration of trust in humanitarians, many respondents in the qualitative consultations expressed disappointment and frustration towards humanitarians because of their failure to respond to their concerns.

Social Cohesion

Movement restrictions have cut people off from their family members and important social connections in other camps. People's inability to see relatives has reduced their ability to cope with shocks because they cannot exchange support. When households were asked "if you had a health emergency and you needed money who would you borrow money from" the top response was from relatives (43%). Movement restrictions have disproportionately impacted vulnerable households such as households led by an elderly member or households with no male of working age because they rely on support from relatives in other camps, such as from married children who have families of their own. These households report being unable to access their usual support such as additional food, money, and support to access services such as health facilities. They also rely on their family for emotional support and those consulted report feelings of loneliness, unsafe and missing their family. The need to be close to and connected with family and those that are from the same village in Rakhine is one of the main drivers of self-relocation between the camps or the resistance to relocation from an unsafe location if a household is near to their relatives and close social connections.

"The relationship among us has decreased recently. Due to the lockdown, we can't currently see our relatives. Our relatives are living in different parts of the camp now. We were together in Myanmar. But now we and our relatives cannot visit one another because of the check posts. Due to the lockdown, the vehicles have stopped and we can't move outside. Because of this, I can't go far away to work. So the relationship among us has decreased."

(Camp 17 household interview)

Discussions with Shomaz committees²² reveal that communities have had four years to develop trusting relationships with the households that live within their Majhi block²³ and that the social cohesion in their block is improving compared to the immediate aftermath of the influx. While many households are from different origins in Myanmar, overtime they have been able to develop a trusting and cooperative relationship. Many households and Shomaz committees from across the 20 survey sites explain that the continued deteriorating in conditions have made their community connections stronger with 52% of respondents reporting improved relationships with their community leaders during the three months. However, at the same time respondents explain that because everyone is struggling to meet their basic needs, it is difficult to share resources between households as a way of social connection and support. Some of those consulted noted that each household must first focus on themselves as opposed to focusing on the collective welfare of the community. This results in an increase in disagreements between households as each tries to ensure that they are receiving assistance and can access the facilities they need. Over half of households (57%) witnessed arguments and verbal altercations in their area between April and July, with 41% of those were reported within their own sub-block, with 48% of those between neighbours, and 17% with host community (mainly camps 10, 15, and 16) and 13% between armed groups (mainly camps 3, 15, and 16). Despite these incidents, it is important to note that when respondents were asked directly about their relationship with their neighbours 55% responded positively explaining that their relationship had improved.

²² Shomaz committees are local groups of male, household leaders that exist in each sub-block to oversee various social and religious functions. For more information please see "Clan, Community and Nation: Belonging among Rohingya in the makeshift camps" (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338645066_CLAN_COMMUNITY_NATION_Belonging_among_Rohingya_living_in_makeshift_camps)

²³ Majhis are government appoint community representatives that assist in the coordination of humanitarian assistance. A majhi block refers the shelters & households that fall under a specific majhi.

Host Community Relations

The majority of respondents reported limited contact and relationship with the host community. There are reports across the survey sites where respondents explain that they generally feel increasingly unwelcome, and that the host community do not want them on their land anymore. However, those that discussed their interaction with the host community explained that the strict movement restrictions and the construction of the fence negatively impacted their relationship because they were no longer able to directly interact with the host community and communicate with them. Some household in camps 1E, 1W, 11, and 12 reported a worsening relationship with the host community with some areas reporting that they were being asked for more rent by the host community or in-kind contributions. There is also a consistent underlying tone of guilt and understanding that the Bangladeshi families have given up their land for them so many Rohingya households feel compelled to at least share what little resources they receive with the host community families to show their appreciation and maintain a good relationship with the host community living nearby.

There were also reports from 29% of surveyed households of host community members such as tomtom drivers, shopkeepers or persons living close to the camp, doing something to harm, hurt or threaten someone from their community. Of those that reported this occurring, 14% stated it has happened more than once, 7% stated it had occurred many times and another 7% explained that they recall one incident between April and July.

"It has made us feel bad. We bought the land to stay here from them for 8,000 taka. After two years, they started saying, 'You have to pay 10,000 taka again. Or else you have to vacate the place.' So, we thought if we had to leave we would die or it would cost same if we would move. So, we bought the land again and paid them money. I asked them, 'We can give you the money once again, but we will not give the rations you ask for.' After we gave them the money, they said again, 'You have to give us rations every month.' So, we are very upset."

(Camp 12 FGD with Shomaz Committee)

"The fingers of a hand are not same which means all of them are not good. Some of them are bad. Allah gives wealth to people by seeing their hearts. There is a person over the hill from us. He doesn't even like our children's walking under his trees, and he just badmouths us. For example, there is a guava trees. If there are any guavas on it, and small children want to catch them, then he starts abusing and badmouthing. Children should have places to play, but they can't play here because of him. All other landlords love us, and we love them as well. If they prepare any feast with a chicken, they invite us for meals. So do we invite them...."

(Camp 11 FGD Shomaz Committee)

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