

Rohingya community's perspective on social relationship with different aspects

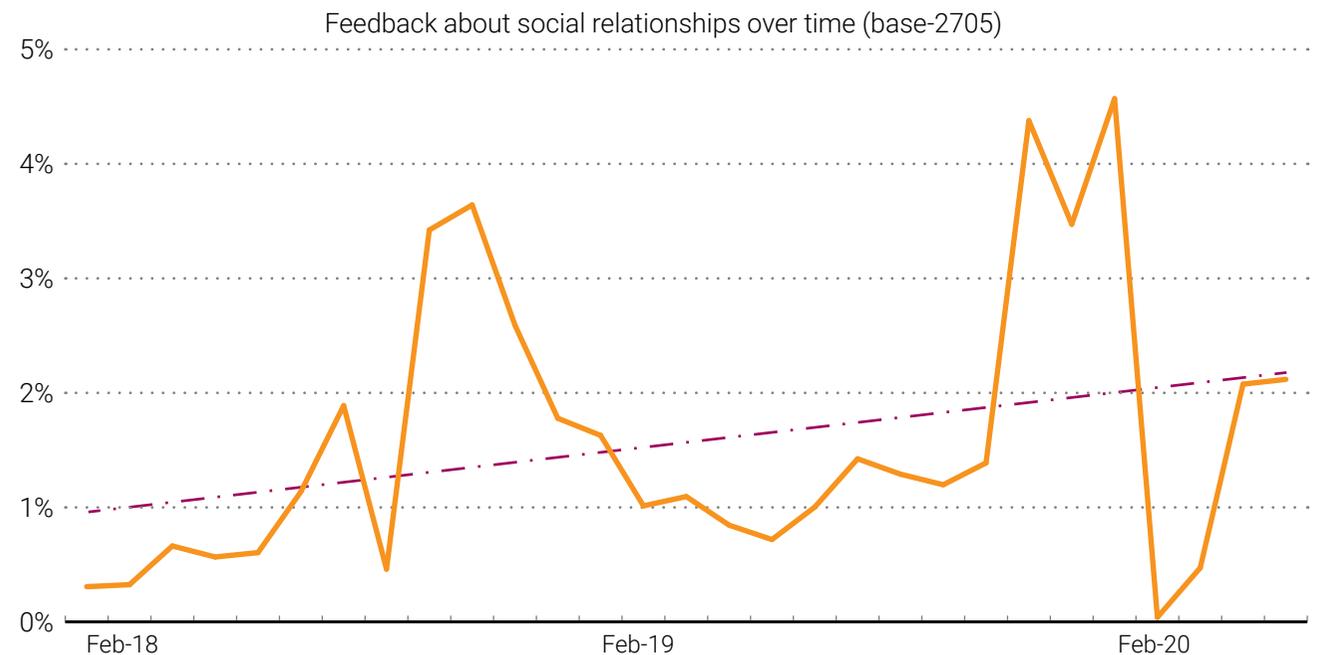
Source: Since the influx of Rohingya people to Cox's Bazar in August 2017, different organisations have been collecting feedback from Rohingya people living in the camps about their concerns. BBC Media Action has been collating this feedback data, which has been analysed in several issues of *What Matters?* reflecting the priorities and concerns of Rohingya people. Now, three years after the beginning of the Rohingya influx, BBC Media Action has re-analysed all the data so far, to understand how Rohingya people were living in the camps with their own community along with the host community. BBC Media Action spoke to individual refugees from different camps to gain a more in depth understanding of the issues. This fortnight, we conducted 8 telephone interviews, four with Rohingya men and four with Rohingya women on 9, 10 and 11 August from camps 7, 19 and 24. In addition, BBC Media Action has conducted a separate study to explore the current relationships between Rohingya people and members of the host communities (qualitative study with 28 participants). The findings of that study have also been used to draw out the insights presented below. The fieldwork of this separate study was conducted from 9-29 July.

WHAT MATTERS?

Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin on Rohingya Response

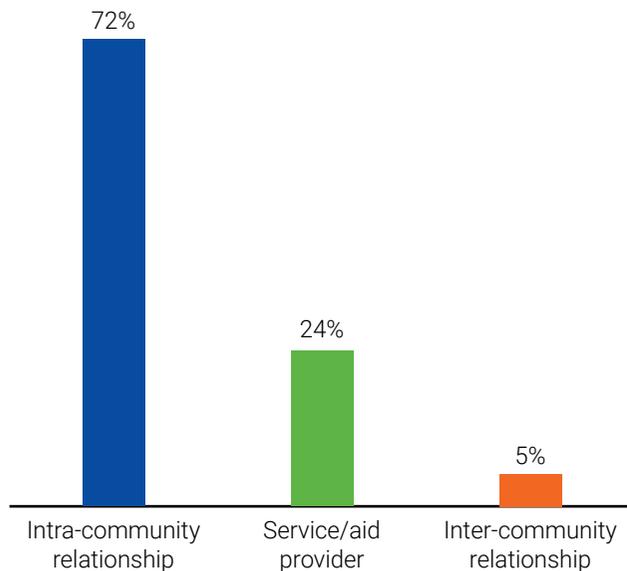
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Over the course of almost three years (from January 2018 to July 2020), BBC Media Action has received 184,645 pieces of community feedback data shared by different humanitarian organisations who are working on the Rohingya response. This data spans all the camps and includes feedback from men and women and different demographics including marginalised people among the Rohingya community. The range of data enables us to look into the concerns of the Rohingya community at different time points, to understand how concerns have shifted patterns over time.



While most of the issues that the Rohingya community have raised over time are related to food, shelter, health and documentation, a small but important proportion of the feedback is related to issues they are facing within their community (intra-community relationship), issues about their relationship with service providers and issues they are facing with the host community (inter-community relationship). Together, we categorise these issues as social relationship related problems. Although only 2% of the total feedback is about these types of concerns, there is a general upward trend in these types of problems over time, as well as some sharp peaks in late 2018 and late 2019 / early 2020. Furthermore, men and women raised their concern regarding gender-based violence, some family issues along with the behaviour of service and relief providers like mahjis and volunteers.

Feedback about social relationships over time (base-2705)



I. Intra-community related issues:

a. Issues Rohingya people are facing within their community

Rohingya people's internal disputes appear to have increased from time to time as they have been living in close proximity and sharing and using common and limited resources like bathrooms, toilets and water sources. As many people have been using these limited resources for a long time, they have experienced problems which are deterring their daily activities. While using shared infrastructure, they have to wait in line and impatience sometimes led to a quarrel or fight. This intra-community relationship is also affected by their familial issues and gender-based violence incidents.

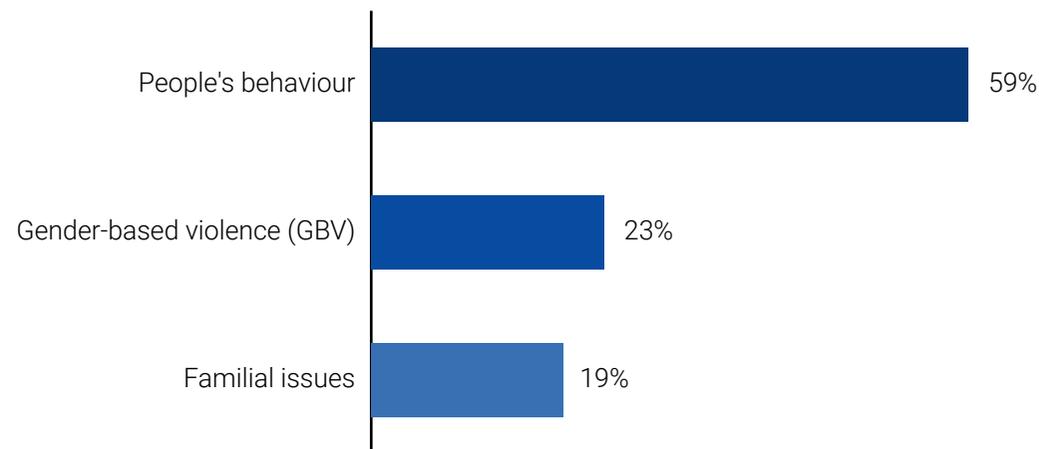
People feel that heavy use of these resources has resulted in regular maintenance issues. For example, toilets get clogged, overflow or become dirty and unhygienic, spreading odours. Facilities can also suffer from damaged doors or structures and water sources can stop functioning. People say that these issues cause quarrels that might end up with a physical fight. In addition, since the infrastructure is shared, people may blame each other

for the damage, which can also escalate into quarrels or fights, eventually. Mismanagement of solid waste, like throwing rubbish on other people's roofs or in front of the shelters, acts as another ignition of conflict. Furthermore, their living places (top or bottom of a hill), eviction from their shelter by a landowner and queuing for relief of to use different facilities are creating inter-community clashes among the Rohingya community people.

“Those, who live at the top of the hill throws out waste and dirty water. We live at the bottom of the hill. As there is no drain, that dirty water rolls down the hill and gets into our house. As water gets into the house, we have quarrelled over this. We already informed the mahji and NGOs and we didn't get any solution yet.”

– Man, 26, camp 19, phone interview by BBC Media Action

Concerns regarding intra-community relationship (base-2061)



b. Gender Based Violence concerns within the Rohingya community

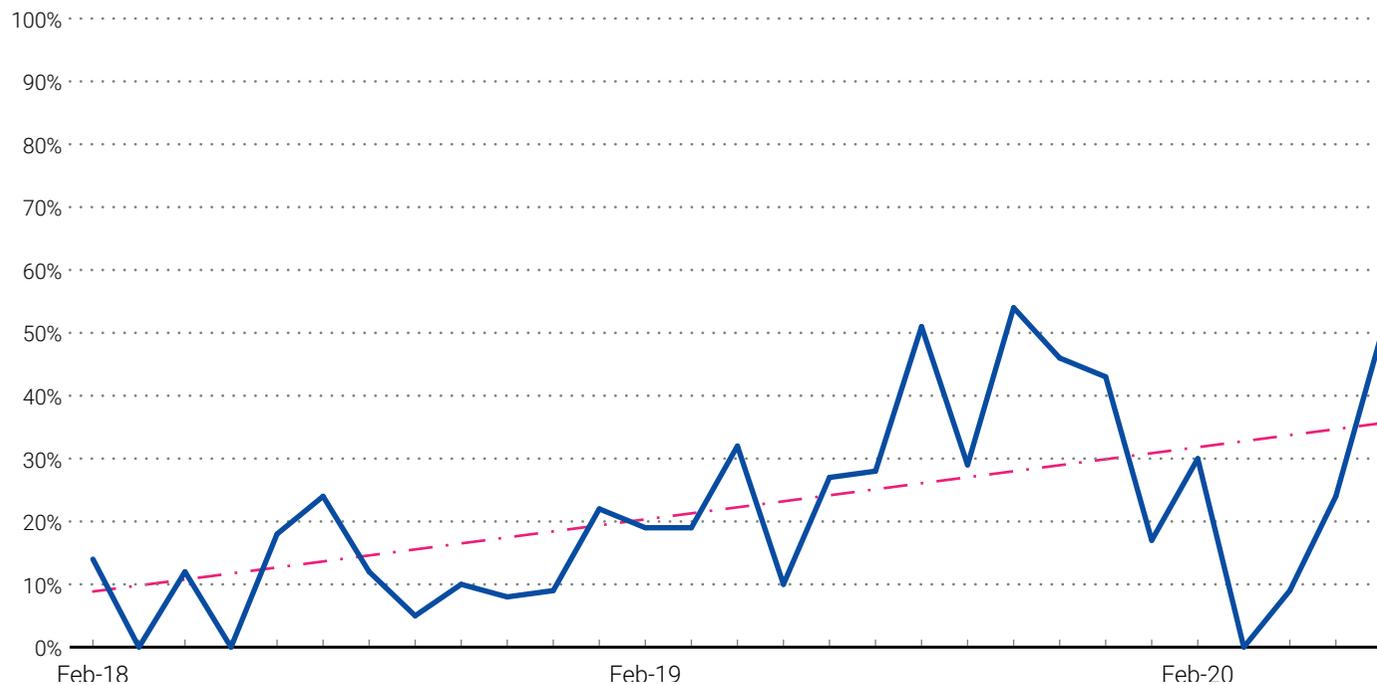
Earlier studies have shown that, within the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar, violence against women and girls within relationships is common, and that women rarely seek support unless they need medical treatment. However there is an indication in the community feedback data that reporting of gender-based violence may be increasing. Among the social relationship issues mentioned in community feedback, 23% are about issues related to GBV, including sexual exploitation or physical assault such as being beaten by their husbands or in-laws. The feedback data and discussion with community members indicated several socio-economical reasons for GBV related incidents, including spouse's (mainly

husband's) involvement in extra marital affairs or a second marriage, depression due to financial crisis, delay in cooking food or collection of firewood. Sometimes these issues are coupled with harmful traditional practices like dowry, child marriage and eve-teasing.

“In the camp, men marry more than one woman. if their wives ask them not to marry another, then they torture them and throw them out of the house.”

– Woman, 50, camp 19,
phone interview by BBC Media Action

Proportion of social relationships feedback related to GBV, by month



c. Concerns related to familial issues within Rohingya community

Concerns related to familial issues form another dimension of intra-community tension within the Rohingya community. According to feedback data, issues being faced include conflicts between husband and wife; issues around divorce or leaving a partner to marry someone else; arguments about relief items; financial problems; family possessions; or being separated from the family. In most cases women, older people and children are those most affected by these issues. There are incidences where older people have been thrown out of the house or deprived of food or other basic needs, and other examples where children were abused by their step-parents or other members from that side of the family.

“Children who grow up with their stepmother are being physically abused.”

– Man, 33, camp 7,
phone interview by BBC Media Action

2. Unsatisfied with the services provided by mahjis and volunteers

Community feedback data suggests that Rohingya people's dissatisfaction with the services provided by mahjis and volunteers has risen since the beginning of the influx. People said they felt that mahjis had become corrupt and that, in exchange for a mahji's help, they had to pay money or give a portion of their relief. People also said that they had to pay when they needed the mahji's help in repairing their shelter, adding their name to a distribution list, collecting distribution tokens or getting permission to set up a businesses. Discussions with the community resonated with the analysis of the community feedback data. Some female participants also said that they felt afraid of complaining against a mahji and were worried that, if they did complain, they would stop receiving any relief.

“Mahji and head mahji as for 500-1000 taka when we ask for any help.”

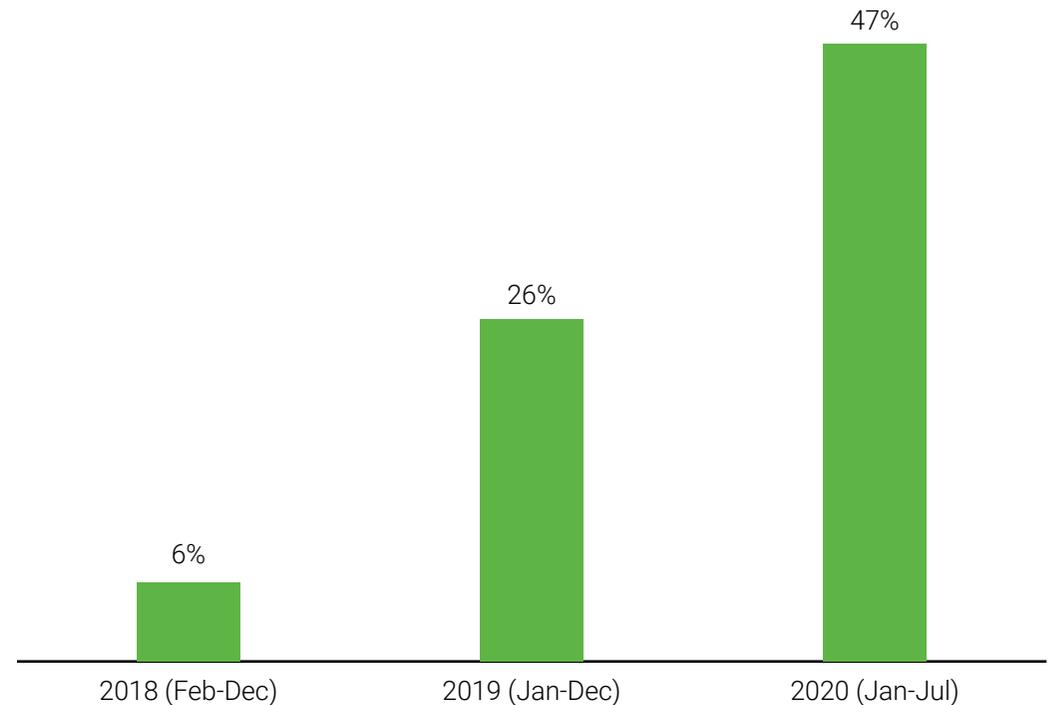
– Woman, 50, camp 19,
phone interview by BBC Media Action

In addition, the community complained that volunteers misbehave with them, use verbally abusive language, make threats, or ask for money or a portion of relief or valuable items in return for help. People also felt that the volunteers were not doing their job properly and sometimes left without completing their assigned tasks.

“Around one year ago, a Rohingya volunteer stole my mobile, I complained to the police...The complaint was sent to the chairman but as I didn't have any money, I wasn't given any solution because the chairman wouldn't do anything without money.”

– Woman, 25, camp 24,
phone interview by BBC Media Action

Proportion of social relationships feedback related to service providers (mahjis and volunteers), by year



3. Concerns about and relationship with the host community

Analysis of the community feedback data suggest that Rohingya people who are living closer to host communities tend to raise more concerns than others who live further away. For example, camps 8E, 11 and 12 are near to Balukhali bazar, which both communities use, and these are among the top camps where concerns about the host community have been raised by Rohingya people.

A separate study conducted recently by BBC Media Action about the relationship between the host and Rohingya community reinforces these findings. According to the study, despite having regular communication for personal and professional reasons, the overall relationship between the host and Rohingya community has been deteriorating over time and both communities blame each other for the decline. People from both communities are living in close proximity and sharing the same space for living, buying or selling goods, using the same roads for transportation, doing business with each other, and often sharing the same workplace.

The Rohingya community feel that the host community are misbehaving and that this has been the most important factor in the decreasing relationship between them. People also said that, sometimes, members of the host

community had restricted Rohingya people from accessing their shelters, WASH facilities, or water sources by locking doors, digging holes in front of houses, or throwing mud or dirt on their roofs or in front of their shelters. They added that issues of land ownership and living on the host community's land had created a power imbalance in the area.

“ They [host community people] can abuse us with words, and we must hear them. There is no other option.”

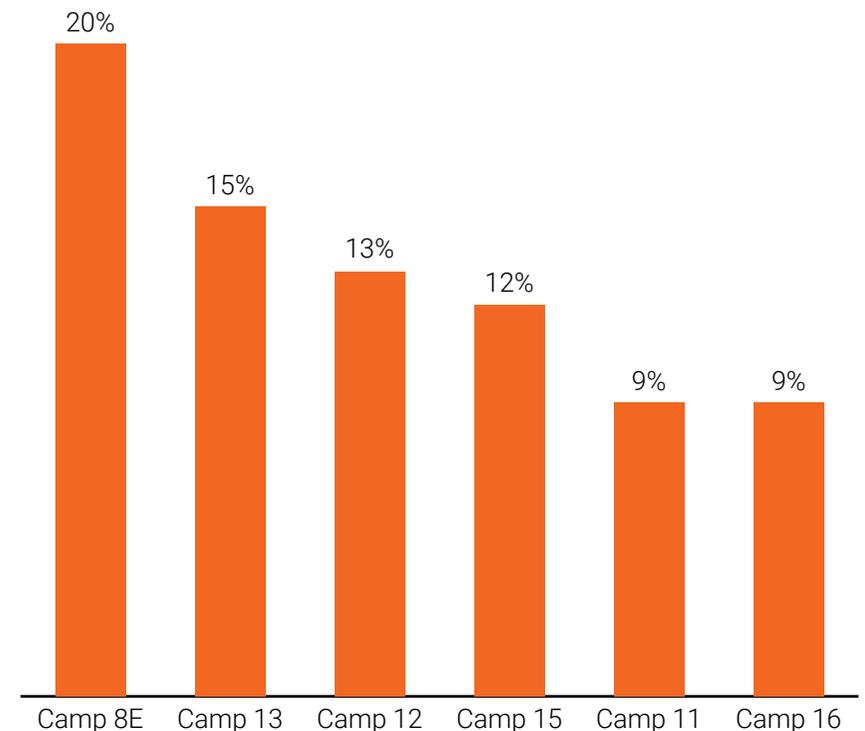
– Rohingya community leader, 30

On the other hand, host community people said that they felt unsafe and could not trust Rohingya people, since they were engaged in criminal activities such as murder, drug dealing, robbery, and terrorism. Men from the host community felt that Rohingya people had tainted some of their community, especially young people, who they said were joining with Rohingya people in these criminal activities.

“ We are feeling unsafe and do not trust them because Rohingya community people are doing various criminal activities...”

– Host community man, 52

Problems with the host communities (base 2848)



Areas where the two communities agree

Both the Rohingya and host community feel that NGOs and government should provide more support to the host community, in order to help the community in the area overall. Both communities felt that an increased level of support to the host community would help to build a positive relationship between the two groups.

The Rohingya community recognised the difficulty that their presence had caused to the lives of the host community people, acknowledging that they had been sharing a lot of resources with the host community for a long time. Rohingya people said that they would like to take steps to help the host community, if possible.

The host community participants said that they had been affected by the presence of the Rohingya community from the beginning of the influx and felt that, as a form of compensation, they should be provided with relief and jobs. One of the participants also mentioned that, if NGOs provided relief to affected people in the host community, then this could generate a positive reaction and help to make the relationship between the two communities more positive.

“ The host community people could eat three times a day before but now they eat two times a day.”

– Rohingya man

“ Host community people should be provided with gas and relief like us, [because they were] affected because of us. There should be more help for those women [in the host community] who had babies and cannot work.”

– Rohingya woman

“ We are affected in every sector of our life just because of the arrival of the Rohingya community... so they (NGOs & government) should help us.”

– Host community man

Some Rohingya participants mentioned that better education would help them to become more responsible towards the host community. People from the host community were also supportive of better education for Rohingya people, although stressed that they thought that education for the Rohingya community should be provided separately from host community services.

BBC Media Action 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 funded by EU humanitarian aid and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

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