



Vaccine perceptions among people aged 55 years and over in the Rohingya camps

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Rohingya ongoing worries about the monsoon season and cyclones

Source: Since January 2018, BBC Media Action has been collating community feedback collected by different agencies through their community feedback and response mechanisms (CFRM) and listening group discussions from different camps. Analysing data published last year in 'What Matters? Issue 41'[i] (July 2020), the Rohingya community's concerns about shelter in the rainy season were noted. More recent data revealed that these concerns were markedly higher amongst women (feedback gathered from Jan-June 2021, base-25,243). To better understand women's concerns, BBC Media Action conducted telephone interviews with 12 women (age 18 – 40) and two women (age 50+) living in camps 22 and 26 (based on the availability of participants) on 21- 22 June and 26 July 2021.

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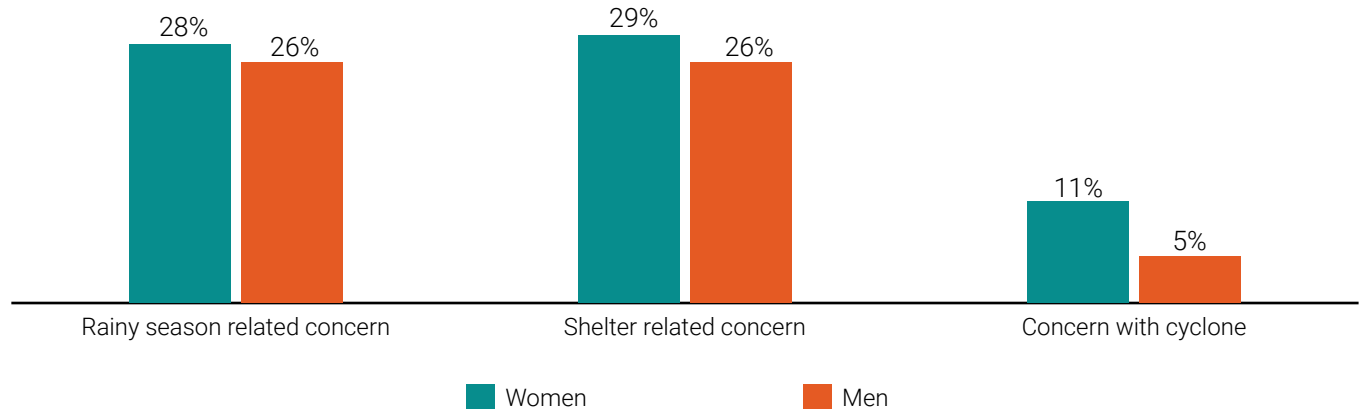
Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin on Rohingya Response

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Community feedback collected from January to June 2021 highlighted the fact that the Rohingya community, once again, had concerns about the upcoming monsoon season (in addition to recurring concerns about documentation and site related issues). These concerns were borne out— after three days of continuous rain from the 26th to the 29th of July, flash floods and landslides affected more than 12,000 refugees in camps in Cox's Bazar. An estimated 2,500 shelters were damaged or destroyed.

Whilst men expressed concerns related to retention walls and the potential for landslides, women were nearly three times more likely than men to raise concerns related to shelter during the monsoon season such as the need for protection walls for shelter strengthening; the potential for landslides; needing shelter repair assistance and support; and the poor condition of roads and stairs.

Concerns about rain and cyclones



Note: Of the 28% of women who mentioned concerns related to the cyclone season, about a third raised shelter related issues, while another 11% mentioned cyclone preparedness.

Having lived in the camps for three years or more, Rohingya people are aware of measures they need to take as a precaution for cyclone preparedness. Interviewees reported the need to store dry food and keep matches and identification cards in polybags. Furthermore, they knew that the cyclone signal means children and older people must return to and stay at home. Concerns were expressed about their shelter, the site and having limited access to health services during this monsoon and cyclone season, but less was mentioned about preparedness.

Women want shelter materials to fortify/improve the condition of homes

Rohingya people said they felt vulnerable because of the poor condition of homes, which they said had the potential to be easily damaged due to storms, heavy rain and landslides. Interviewees said many of the shelters were built when they arrived in the camps, years ago, and have since deteriorated. They pointed out specific issues such as termite damage to bamboo, damage to pillars, and leaks in tarpaulin. Previous monsoon seasons have been problematic and they expressed concern that the shelters would become uninhabitable in further heavy rains. (This has happened, as predicted by respondents.)

“ We always worry about our shelters collapsing during the cyclone/*tufan* (storms).”

– Rohingya female, 31, Camp 22

Those interviewed pointed out that some shelters are particularly vulnerable because of where they are located, such as on slopes or at the bottom or top of a hill. Furthermore, they worried about landslides, high winds, and rainwater flowing into shelters due to narrow/clogged drains.

Most people did not get NGO support and can't afford repairs – a particular concern for older people and widows

Those interviewed said their shelters needed repairs before the coming cyclones. However, very few were able to attempt repairs on their own due to lack of funds. Others reported that the community has collected money amongst themselves, without NGO intervention, to fund repairs to the shelters of widows and older people.

“ Those who are widows, sometimes sell their relief products or other people collect money for helping widows to repair their shelters.”

– Rohingya female, 26, Camp 26

“ Older people have anxiety— what will they do if *tufan* (storms) come to the camps.”

– Rohingya female, 31, Camp 22

Those interviewed said shelter related problems have been raised with NGO workers, but they haven't been addressed. As mentioned earlier, they reported attempting to repair their own shelters and help each other, but said they didn't have enough money to buy materials. Some said that last year government and/or NGO preparedness support was provided, but this year, due to Covid-19, NGO workers had not led any preparedness initiatives.

“ Due to Covid-19, NGO workers were not able to come to the camps to repair our shelter.”

– Rohingya female, 31, Camp 22

Those interviewed said they also raised their concerns with doctors and nurses when visiting health facility centres, but were referred to NGO workers. In addition, they raised these issues with mahjis (local community leaders).

Roads, toilets, and drainage systems of concern

Those interviewed raised concerns about the site. For example, since roads are not built of brick, they get muddy when it rains making it difficult to move around the camps, especially for older people, who need to seek safety during a cyclone. Therefore, they think all roads should be built with bricks and cement. Those interviewed also mentioned the need to repair toilet shelters (roofs and walls), drains, retention walls, and stairs in preparation for the coming monsoon season.

“ As the roads are not made of bricks, when the *tufan* (storms)/ comes, the roads become muddy and that's why we cannot move to other places easily.”

– Rohingya female, 26, Camp 26

“ Our toilets will be damaged when the *tufan* (storms) comes because they are made of tin and plastic.”

– Rohingya female, 32, Camp 22

Interviewees expressed concerns about electricity poles (*Khamba*) being blown down during a cyclone.

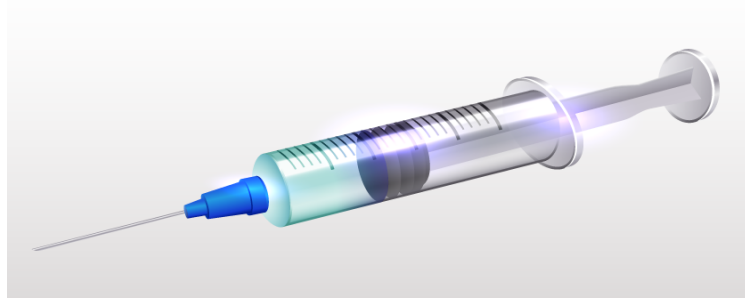
“ When *tufan* (storms)/ start in camp, we are afraid about whether the hospital will remain open or not, whether trees, electric poles or the shed of toilets fall on us and whether the hills will collapse and destroy our shelters.”

– Rohingya female, 32, Camp 22

Those interviewed said that due to site related problems such as muddy roads and stairs, people have difficulty accessing health-related services. Some reported that volunteers in blocks have helped pregnant and older people go to health facilities and that this would be necessary going forward.

“ It is impossible to go to the health centres during the cyclone as the roads are not in a good condition. Moreover, the health centre could be closed and if it is open, it is hard because we have to wait in line.”

– Rohingya female, 32, Camp 22



Vaccine perceptions among people aged 55 years and over in the Rohingya camps

Source: To understand current community perspectives relating to the Covid-19 vaccines and their associated information needs, Translators without Borders (TWB) conducted interviews over the phone with 9 women, 5 men and 4 imams from the from camps 1W, 2E, 3, 4, 5 & 25. The interviews took place in early August 2021.

Rohingya people aged 55 and over will be the first to receive the Covid-19 vaccine as it is rolled out in the camps. To explore the perspectives of older people regarding the vaccine TWB spoke to a small group of camp residents aged between 55 and 75. Four imams were also interviewed to explore their perspectives on the vaccine, given their important role in the community as trusted sharers of information. Interviews suggest that a majority of camp residents in this age group are ready and willing to receive the vaccine. However, they need a lot more information about the vaccine roll-out in the camps, as well as general information and education about how vaccines work and the risks to them and their loved ones. Support for the vaccine also appears high among imams, but they lack the information needed to promote support for the vaccine campaign.

Rohingya understanding of how viruses are spread influences their Covid-19 prevention

The majority of respondents express continuing concern about Covid-19, while a few are not concerned, as they feel protected either by following Covid guidelines or by their faith in Allah. Regardless, all respondents report taking measures to reduce the risk of contracting Covid-19, mostly wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and regularly washing their hands and cleaning their homes. The focus on hygiene (hand washing and house cleaning) is likely connected with the Rohingya understanding of viruses. The Rohingya term for virus is *fuk*, a broad term which also refers to bacteria, germs and worms (such as intestinal worms). A disease (*biaram*) is generally thought to be due to infection with *fuk* when a person touches or inhales dirt (*ho*sara*) or rubbish (*furari*). Covid-19 is considered a type of *fuk*, so cleaning and good hygiene are important to avoid catching it.

“ We practice hygiene such as washing hands often and keeping the house and environment clean.”

– Rohingya woman, 65, Camp 2E

“ We wash our hands with soap frequently, wear masks when we go outside, avoid large gatherings of people and follow other hygiene protocols. These are the measures we follow in our house.”

– Rohingya man, 75, Camp 5

People believe that getting vaccinated is important but more vaccine education is needed

Thirteen of the 14 community members interviewed and all 4 imams believe that getting vaccinated is generally important, but most are confused about how vaccines work. Respondents report either neutral or positive previous experiences with vaccines but some fear that getting a vaccine might cause death. While most respondents say that they know what a vaccine is, their descriptions indicate that there is confusion about what vaccines do.

All respondents are aware that vaccines are something which keeps people healthy and free from disease or illness, but they broadly see vaccines as a treatment rather than a preventative measure. Three are unable to describe what a vaccine is, another three see ‘vaccine’ as a synonym for ‘injection’, while the remainder describe vaccines as something which kills bacteria or disease in the body. Some also recognise vaccines as a means of protecting them from diseases or illnesses more generally, rather than from specific conditions, and many respondents associate vaccines mostly with babies and children.

“ A vaccine is a kind of injection which is usually given to kill bacteria in our body and keep us safe.”

– Rohingya man, 70 years old, Camp 5

“ When you get a vaccine it kills the virus in your body.”

– Imam, 32, Camp 4

People understand the purpose of the Covid-19 vaccine and want to get vaccinated

Although there is confusion about what vaccines do, respondents understand that the Covid-19 vaccine's purpose is to protect them and the community from being infected by and spreading Covid-19. When asked if they would get the vaccine when it is available to them, the 4 imams and 13 of the 14 community members said they would. Eleven of the 14 community members interviewed believe the vaccine is safe. The one person who does not plan to get the vaccine believes that only Allah can protect someone from illness or enable them to recover.

“ The purpose of this vaccine is to protect the people from asthma and coronavirus.”

– Rohingya woman, 65, Camp 5

“ Only Allah can help us to recover from any diseases.”

– Rohingya woman, 60, Camp 2E

People need information on the vaccine, especially when they will be eligible to receive it

Only two respondents, one community member and one imam, report having received any information about when they will be eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine. The community member heard that NGO volunteers will come to their homes to give the vaccine but they do not know when this will happen. The imam heard that NGOs will provide information about the roll-out over loudspeakers. No respondents are aware who will receive the vaccine first. Five of the 14 community members interviewed say they have concerns about the Covid-19 vaccine. These concerns generally stem from a lack of information about it. People want to know when they will receive the vaccine, who is eligible (particularly whether children are eligible), who will be vaccinated first, how safe it is, and more broadly how it works.

“ I want to know how this vaccine will work in the human body and how effective it is.”

– Rohingya woman, 65, Camp 5

“ We heard that we will get the vaccine but still we do not know when and how we will get it.”

– Rohingya woman, 55, Camp 1W

Imams will encourage community members to get vaccinated but need more information about the vaccine

Like the community members interviewed, some imams have information, particularly from family and friends, about the development of Covid-19 vaccines and vaccination campaigns in Europe and elsewhere. Three of the 4 imams report that community members have approached them for information about the vaccine and that they have shared the limited information they have in their sermons or in private conversations. All 4 imams say that they believe that the vaccine is safe and that they will encourage community members to get it.

Trust in information provided by imams is high: a 2018 study found that imams were trusted by 100% of a representative sample of camp residents. Given imams' support for the vaccine and their reach and influence in the community, they have the potential to play a key role in fostering uptake and community support for the vaccine campaign. NGOs and CiCs are also both highly trusted sources of information and can be effective in sharing Covid-19 vaccine information. As found in numerous studies by TWB and others, the camp community's preference is for information to be shared in Rohingya either face to face or through loudspeakers or miking.

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.

This work is currently being delivered in partnership with the International Rescue Committee with funding from the United States Government. And in partnership with ACF with funding from EU humanitarian aid.

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