



Mahjis' perspectives on sharing information with people with disabilities, older people, and women

Find out more on page 3

WHAT MATTERS?

Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin on Rohingya Response

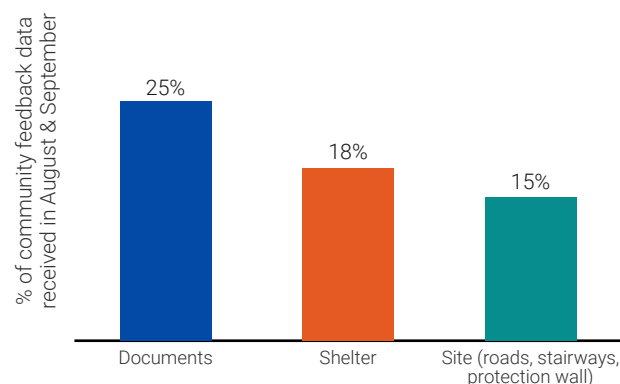
Issue 57 × Tuesday, November 30, 2021

Source: Since January 2018, BBC Media Action has been collating community feedback collected by different agencies¹ through their community feedback and response mechanisms (CFRM) and listening group discussions from different camps. This issue, which focuses on concerns raised by people with disabilities and older people (age 60 and above), is based on data received between August and September 2021 from 630 respondents based in different camps. To better understand these concerns, BBC Media Action conducted nine in-depth interviews with people with physical and intellectual disabilities (four men and five women, age 18-60) based in Camp 4 and 12 on 24-27 and 31 of October 2021. In last weeks of October 2021, BBC Media Action conducted a qualitative research study including person with disability and findings were incorporated in this issue of *What Matters?*. 34 interviews were conducted (21 with person with disability, considering participants who have physical, vision, hearing and intellectual disability, three mahjis, six older people and four practitioners) in Camp 4 and Camp 12.

People with disabilities don't know how to renew or update their cards affecting their access to services in the camps

In August and September, the three primary concerns highlighted by people with disabilities, older people and their family members/caregivers revolved around: documents, shelter and the site.

Concerns raised by people with disabilities and the elderly or their family members / caregivers living in the Rohingya community (base = 630)



Concerns related to their documents had to do with their perception that they were not receiving services to which they thought they were entitled. In in-depth interviews, both male and female participants said they had not been

included on lists of 'people with special criteria', therefore were not eligible to receive services such as fresh vegetables and other services. They said that although they asked their mahji (local community leader) to help them, most were referred to the World Food Programme (WFP) distribution centre and Camp in Charge (CiC) offices by their mahji. They were asked to go to these places to update their cards to indicate their 'special criteria' to receive services accordingly.

Furthermore, participants said they didn't know which documents to bring/were required when updating their cards. A male participant with a physical disability said that failure to show a medical report on his first visit to the registration centre (managed by different agencies) prevented him from updating his SMART card. He highlighted how difficult it was to go to the registration centre more than once as the roads are not very accessible and he needs other people's help, sometimes requiring payment. This is consistent with accounts from other participants who said that their **lack of knowledge of the correct documents resulted in the need for repeated travel, which is not possible for most.**

1. Agencies include the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and Concern Worldwide.

Participants said that, as moving around the camp is challenging for them, they send their family members to receive relief items or to update their cards on their behalf. The family members interviewed raised similar concerns about people with disabilities given the poor condition of roads and stairs.

Participants need their shelters repaired – there are concerns about landslides.

In both community feedback and in-depth interviews, participants talked about their struggles with shelter. Many mentioned they needed shelter kits or additional materials to repair their shelters. They pointed out that the kits they receive are not sufficient to repair their shelters.

“ I did not get any shelter kit in the last two years. My shelter got damaged after the heavy rain. I asked for bamboo to repair my shelter. But the bamboo provided by the agencies are not enough for me.”

– Rohingya male with a physical disability, 48, Camp 12

Participants said their shelters were damaged due to heavy rain. They have voiced their concerns with mahji and volunteers, but they are yet to receive help.

Some participants mentioned that as their shelters are built on hills, they are worried shelter will collapse due to landslides. Moreover, people said they wanted repairs done to protection walls, to strengthen their shelters and ensure they are safe in case of a landslide.

Agencies base their shelter material distribution on which beneficiaries' shelters are most in need of repair. As people in the community are not aware of the criteria they feel their personal needs are not being met.

Nature of the infrastructure limits the mobility of the people with disabilities and the elderly

Participants said poorly maintained pathways and stairs are limiting their ability to move around the camps. They said they fear they might get hurt if they use the poor roads and stairs, which would worsen the already difficult situation in which they live. For some participants, the fear of traveling long distances using poorly paved pathways stops them from lodging a complaint or giving feedback about the SMART card.

“ I do not go out of my shelter even to collect water. Because the water tap is far away from my shelter and roads are not good. I must cross bricks and large stairs to get to the water source. My husband and neighbour help me with that. I am scared that if I fall down, I might get hurt and will not be able to do my regular activities like cooking and taking care of my child.”

– Rohingya female with a physical disability, 35, Camp 4

Participants said they inform the mahji of their problems (food relief, card related and other issues) since it is hard for them to go anywhere and because they don't know who to go to about the difficulties they face. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, volunteers/ NGO staff rarely visit them in the camps, they rely on their mahji to solve any problems.

Apart from the mahji, participants said they speak with volunteers/non-government organisation (NGO) staff in the camp who visit them in their homes. Participants said that often volunteers/NGO staff could not give answers or provide useful or relevant information to the queries person with disability had. Participants also said that, sometimes few volunteers/NGO staff misbehaved with them telling that “is not their job”.



Mahjis' perspectives on sharing information with people with disabilities, older people, and women

In the camps, mahjis play a central role in getting information to community members, acting as a bridge between NGOs and the authorities, and the community. TWB spoke to mahjis from five camps to explore their experiences and perspectives of sharing information in the camps, particularly with older people, people with disabilities and women.

Some mahjis face challenges understanding information they receive

The mahjis interviewed mostly share information at mosques on Fridays when community members gather for Friday prayers, at community meetings and sometimes through loudspeakers or miking. All the mahjis interviewed predominantly receive information to share with the community from NGOs and CiCs, but also sometimes from the police, army and other mahjis. They share information on a variety of topics, with food distribution, Covid-19 and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) the most common. Six mahjis said they normally receive information in Rohingya, two said in Bangla and one said in both Bangla and Rohingya. Two of the three who report regularly receiving information in Bangla face challenges understanding the information.

“ Sometimes it's difficult to understand information given by CICs and NGOs because they speak in Bangla.”

– Imam, Camp 2W

Mahjis want to receive more information to share with the community

Five of the mahjis feel they do not have access to the information they need for the community. All want more information about the situation in Myanmar and updates on the repatriation process, which community members often ask them about. All the mahjis interviewed want to receive more information to share with the community, including information about repatriation, WASH, social cohesion, and disaster preparedness.



Source: To understand mahjis' information and language perspectives and needs, Translators without Borders (TWB) conducted interviews over the phone with nine mahjis working in camps 1E, 1W, 2W, 5, 26 and Nayapara registered camp. The interviews took place in November 2021.

Not all mahjis think people with disabilities, older people, and women face challenges accessing information

Six of the nine mahjis interviewed recognise that some people in the community face added challenges accessing information. They identified older people, people with disabilities and widows, as well as women more broadly, as people with reduced information access due to their limited movement outside the home. Five of the mahjis said they face challenges getting information to these community members. While making home visits enables them to reach many of those who cannot come to them for information, they said they are unable to visit everyone.

“ We are not able to do home visits all the time, so it's difficult for us to get the information to people who have limited mobility or people who mostly stay at home.”

– Imam, Nayapara registered camp

“ Women can't go outside of the house. If a man gets five pieces of information, a woman will get two pieces of information because they always stay at home.”

– Imam, Camp 1E

The other mahjis believe they can get information to everyone in the community, particularly through sharing information at mosques, and that information is then shared throughout the community by word of mouth. Four of the mahjis interviewed believe that people with disabilities and women have the same level of access to information as the rest of the community, while five believe older people have the same access.



To reach those with limited mobility, mahjis suggest more use of loudspeakers (miking), home visits and volunteers

“ Miking is the only option so that everyone will be able to access information. It is difficult to share information by going house to house. Sometimes the speaker at the mosque is used and we have to pay to use it.”

– Imam, Camp 1E

To increase women’s information access, mahjis recommend creating more designated spaces for women to receive information, having more female volunteers visiting women in their homes, and using miking. One also said there is a need to increase the number of women community leaders. To get information to older people and people with disabilities, mahjis suggested more miking and home visits (with the help of volunteers) and, for older people, organising meetings in homes in their areas so they don’t need to travel.

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