
ROHINGYA INFORMATION PREFERENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

NGOs AND MAJHIS ARE THE MAIN AND MOST TRUSTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Rohingya people have clear preferences regarding the languages and formats in which they want to receive information. Various factors can impact someone's access to information, including the languages they speak and understand, literacy levels, cultural beliefs and systems, and their level of mobility outside the home. These and other factors also influence people's information needs and preferences, deciding how and in what formats they can and want to receive information. To better understand Rohingya people's experiences of receiving and accessing information in the camps, and their preferred information sources and channels, TWB interviewed a small group of Rohingya

people. This report outlines the findings of these interviews.

Who we spoke to

In late November and early December, 2021, TWB conducted semi-structured interviews with 39 members of the Rohingya community. Participants were 22 men and 17 women aged 18 to 55 from 11 camps (1E, 1W, 2E, 2W, 3, 5, 8W, 10, 13, 18, 26, and Kutupalong and Nayapara registered camps). Six respondents report having disabilities or medical conditions which impact their mobility.

NGOs and *majhis* are people's main and most trusted sources of information

Community members interviewed identified their main sources of information as NGOs and *majhis*. Of the 39 respondents, 38 gave NGOs and 31 *majhis* as their main sources of information. This was consistent between men and women, and among respondents with disabilities or medical conditions affecting their mobility.

From NGOs, people most commonly receive information about hygiene, health, disaster preparedness and food distribution, while from *majhis* they predominantly receive information about camp security and community harmony. None of the 39 respondents report facing any issues understanding the information received from NGOs and *majhis*, as they receive it in verbal or audio formats and in Rohingya.

For 15 of the 17 women interviewed, it is NGO volunteers who are the source of information from NGOs, mostly through home visits and sometimes through meetings and miking. This supports TWB research from 2021 which found that volunteer community health workers are the most common and trusted source of health information for Rohingya women in the camps.¹ In contrast, the men interviewed generally receive information from NGOs through miking or at meetings, with only

4 of 22 saying they get such information through home visits. People generally receive information from *majhis* face-to-face, particularly at meetings, while some receive through miking and home visits.

Among those interviewed, NGOs were by far the most trusted information source: 33 of the 39 interviewees said they trusted information from NGOs or NGO volunteers. Fourteen people mentioned *majhis* as trusted information sources, and 9 mentioned either CiCs, their volunteers or the Bangladesh government. Neighbors and other members of the wider community are the least trusted source. Interviewees felt these groups lie, spread rumors or simply lack access to accurate and reliable information.

"I mostly believe information from majhis and NGOs since NGOs are working for us and they will never give us misinformation. Majhis are community leaders and always try to provide accurate information which they hear from NGOs or CIC meetings so we all believe them too." - Rohingya man, 44 years old

"We believe majhis most because since we arrived in Bangladesh they look after us and help us to solve problems." - Rohingya woman, 23 years old

For men, other main sources of information include friends (7), CiCs (6), and the internet or social media (4). Women also mentioned family (5) and friends (2) and CiCs (5), but just 1 listed

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<https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Community-health-workers-The-main-source-of-health-information-for-Rohingya-women-research.pdf>

the internet as an information source. From CiCs and CiC volunteers, people most commonly receive information on camp security, community harmony, and disaster preparedness. From friends and family, people generally receive secondhand information from other sources, while they generally access international news on the internet.

People prefer to receive information in person or through miking

When asked about information they have received recently that they have found useful and easy to understand, 37 of 39 respondents spoke of information received from NGOs. All examples given of useful and readily understandable information were received either face-to-face in meetings, home visits or through miking. With only a couple of exceptions, the information was in Rohingya. All but 3 respondents receive information in their area through miking and loudspeakers.

Interviewees' preferred formats for receiving information are face-to-face (in meetings or home visits), miking, video and audio - in that order. Miking, video, and meetings were mostly popular among men, while home visits were mostly popular among women.

“As we do not go anywhere outside our house we prefer if they can visit us.”
- Rohingya woman, 35 years old

People face obstacles accessing information and recognize obstacles faced by certain community members

Twenty-one interviewees say they personally face obstacles accessing the information they need or want. Most of these individuals say they also know others who face obstacles, while 7 say they do not personally face obstacles but know people who do. Obstacles identified include poor phone and internet access, NGO workers being too busy to answer questions, a lack of services and support for people with disabilities, and simply not knowing how or where to access information.

Thirty-two respondents recognize that certain members of the community face challenges accessing the information they need. They most commonly identify older people and people with disabilities as facing added challenges accessing information due to their restricted movement.

Thirty-three respondents say that women do not have the same level of access to information as men, including 16 of the 17 women interviewed. Fourteen of the women say that being a woman impacts their access to information.

“As women, we cannot access all the information because we need our husbands' permission to go out. If all the volunteers come to our house to give information that would be better.”
- Rohingya woman, 26 years old

Twenty-five of the 39 interviewees say they

don't have access to the information they need and want. Twenty-two want more information about repatriation, and others want more information on topics including security, disease prevention, education, employment, and disaster preparedness. While many people report receiving information about health, some want more information about specific topics such as protecting themselves from disease. Likewise, people are receiving information about camp security, but some want to know more about how to stay safe in the camps. Further research and conversations are needed with the community to better understand and meet their specific information needs.

Recommendations for humanitarians

The Rohingya community have clear preferences regarding how they prefer to receive information. Based on the community perspectives discussed here, we recommend that humanitarians:

- Continue, and, where possible, expand efforts to share information with the community face-to-face and through miking
- Consider expanding the use of video and audio formats for sharing information, particularly with men
- Explore ways of providing more information through home visits, particularly for women
- Consider ways of improving *majhis'* access to information and their ability to share information
- Conduct further research and regular consultation with the Rohingya community to build understanding of their changing information needs
- Explore ways of increasing NGOs' and *majhis'* access to information the community needs and facilitating increased sharing of that information in their preferred formats



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About Translators without Borders

TWB is a nonprofit organization offering language and translation support for humanitarian and development agencies and other nonprofit organizations on a global scale. TWB Bangladesh has supported the Rohingya response since 2017, providing language and translation support to response partners and conducting research and training to meet the language and communication needs of the Rohingya and host communities.

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