
COMPLAINT AND FEEDBACK MECHANISMS ARE MISSING THE VOICES OF WOMEN AND PEOPLE WITH RESTRICTED MOBILITY

ROHINGYA WOMEN ESPECIALLY NEED MORE OPTIONS FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK AND MAKING COMPLAINTS

In the Cox's Bazar camps, complaint and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) play a key role in ensuring responding organizations are accountable to camp residents. These systems allow the Rohingya community to communicate their experiences and needs to humanitarians. For the community to be heard and have their needs met, it is important that they can readily provide feedback and make complaints.

TWB interviewed camp residents about their experiences and perspectives relating to providing feedback and making complaints.

We found that a number of groups who typically struggle to make their voices heard in

the community are often unable to register complaints and feedback through the humanitarian system. These include women, people with restricted mobility or disabilities, and some individuals over 50 years of age. Issues are linked to a lack of information about how to access CFMs combined with cultural discomfort about complaining, a fear of being refused services, and constraints on women's engagement with people outside their immediate family.

This report outlines findings from the interviews and provides recommendations to the humanitarian community on making CFMs more accessible.

Who we spoke to

In December 2021, TWB, in collaboration with BBC Media Action, Bangladesh, conducted semi-structured interviews with 42 members of the Rohingya community. The interviewees were 21 men and 21 women aged 18 to 78 years old. The research team also interviewed 5 NGO workers and volunteers who work in Information Hubs and in the community gathering feedback and complaints from camp residents.

Most people know where to go to register feedback or complaints but nearly half don't know how to

Thirty-six of the 42 community members interviewed say they know where to go in their local area to provide feedback or make a complaint, but just 24 know how to. Only 14 of the 42 interviewees report having received information in the past –13 from NGOs –about providing feedback and making complaints.

People worry that their concerns will not be addressed or taken seriously

Ten of the 42 interviewees, 5 men and 5 women, had registered feedback or complaints in the previous 12 months. Their issues were with food distribution, WASH, shelter, family matters and health. Six of the 10 were not satisfied with the response to their issue, mostly feeling that it was too slow or that the issue was never addressed.

Of the 42 community members interviewed, only 18 believe their complaints will be taken

seriously, 14 that what they say will be kept confidential, and just 13 that they will get a response.

Language, culture, gender and mobility impact CFM access

Ten interviewees report facing language or cultural obstacles to accessing CFMs. The language challenges were mostly about difficulties communicating with Bangla-speaking staff, as the individuals concerned don't understand Bangla. Five of the 6 people reporting cultural obstacles were women; the obstacles were mostly about women not being allowed to communicate with men outside of their families.

“In the service centers the people speak Bangla or Chittagonian so we have some difficulty understanding.” - Rohingya woman, 48 years old

Of the 12 interviewees who report having a disability or restricted mobility, 10 believe that this limits their ability to access CFMs. Among the 15 interviewees aged 50 and over, 5 believe their age is a limiting factor. The NGO workers and volunteers noted that older community members rarely come to facilities and attend discussion sessions to register feedback and complaints: people using these channels are generally 20–40 years old.

Women feel less comfortable sharing feedback and complaints and face specific obstacles to doing so

Of the 42 respondents, 26 people (16 men, 10

women) say they feel comfortable providing feedback, while only 18 (12 men, 6 women) feel comfortable making complaints. Fourteen of the 21 women interviewed feel that women face additional obstacles to providing feedback and making complaints. They speak of feeling ignored or not listened to and of being judged negatively by the community if they leave their homes to voice concerns.

“We always tell our problems to the majhi and volunteers, but they do not give us any response. And we cannot go outside our home to make complaints in the NGO office as we always have to stay inside the house and my son and husband will not give us permission to go outside to provide feedback or make complaints.” - Rohingya woman, 52 years old

Additionally, women say that they and other women need permission from male family members to leave the home or to make a complaint - particularly husbands but also sons. Their movements and decisions are often controlled by the men in their households. Women also expressed concern that women-only households face additional challenges. One woman without male relatives said she and her mother are hesitant to lodge complaints out of fear of having services and support cut off.

“The women who do not have husbands, they usually face problems here because they cannot reach out to anyone without the help of men, as they cannot travel away from their homes alone.” - Rohingya

woman, 30 years old

“We do not have any male family members in our family, there’s only my mom and me, so we feel so afraid to go and make complaints in case they stop giving us the food or support we get in the camp. Then we will have no options.” - Rohingya woman, 18 years old

Reduced staff numbers and lockdowns during the pandemic impacted CFM access for some

Eleven people say that the pandemic impacted their access to services, particularly food distribution and medical care, and 7 report that the pandemic impacted their ability to register feedback and complaints. The two key issues they identified were reduced numbers of NGO staff in the camps during the pandemic and lockdowns implemented to limit the spread of Covid-19.

NGO workers and volunteers collect feedback and complaints at facilities and homes and face various challenges

Organizations collect feedback and complaints from camp residents through community outreach and designated feedback points at facilities.

The 5 NGO workers and volunteers interviewed described gathering feedback and complaints from community members at dedicated Information Hub desks, through group discussion sessions, at group meetings in people’s homes, and through door-to-door

home visits. In each scenario, feedback and complaints are gathered from the community members and written down for information and follow-up.

At the Information Hub desks, interviewees report noting down the details of the issue and sharing this with the relevant organization. If the issue requires the community member to visit another office or facility, the worker refers them to that location and, in some cases, arranges for them to be accompanied there. One fieldworker working in an Information Hub noted that at their facility it takes up to 3 months for an issue to be solved, while some are never solved.

The fieldworkers and volunteers interviewed report facing some challenges when gathering feedback and complaints from the community. At Information Hubs, these include community members expecting them to solve issues which they are not able to deal with, like legal or police matters. They also find community members become frustrated with delays in responding to their requests and blame the Information Hub staff when their issues are not resolved.

Those who collect feedback through community outreach described different challenges. These include community members expecting snacks or other incentives to take part in discussions and husbands forbidding their wives from joining feedback sessions with female volunteers. One female volunteer also says some men are rude to her, refusing requests for a glass of water and

shutting the door in her face. She said it is a challenge to do community outreach in the camps on her own.

People want to communicate face-to-face and need to feel heard

When it comes to how people would prefer to engage with CFMs, a majority of the community members interviewed would prefer to attend nearby NGO, CiC and UN agency offices or have someone visit their home. With the exception of 3 who would prefer to do this in writing, all respondents want to do this face-to-face at the offices or home, with privacy, confidentiality and respect key concerns.

Suggestions from the NGO workers and volunteers interviewed for improving CFMs in the camps included recruiting more Rohingya volunteers to assist with home visits and meetings, as well enlisting the help of imams and *majhis* to share information with the community about CFMs.

The community members interviewed want more facilities to be created to receive feedback and complaints. However, given gaps in knowledge about CFM, it is possible that some people are simply not aware of the available services in their localities and that increasing awareness and knowledge about CFMs is necessary.

“I would like to provide feedback or complaints in a separate office where I can openly express myself face to face.”

- Rohingya man, 52 years old

When asked how CFMs could be improved, people requested quicker response times, more home visits and meetings to share their concerns and spoke of wanting to feel that they are listened to and respected in the process.

“I would feel more comfortable to provide feedback or complaints if NGOs provide us with timely and satisfactory responses.”

- Rohingya man, 60 years old

Recommendations for humanitarians

Based on the community perspectives of CFMs presented here, we recommend that humanitarians:

- Explore ways of increasing women’s access to and comfort engaging with CFMs, particularly through education and outreach with male family members, increased home visits by female Rohingya speakers, and organized meetings in spaces which are accessible and comfortable for women
- Develop targeted strategies to ensure that female-headed households can engage with CFMs, particularly through home visits by female Rohingya speakers
- Create more opportunities for older people and people with disabilities or mobility challenges to participate in CFMs, particularly through increased home visits
- Conduct targeted awareness raising and educational activities to inform the community about different CFM processes, including information about where to go in their localities to share feedback and complaints about specific issues
- Look for practical ways of reducing response times for CFMs, and communicate expected response times to community members
- Conduct further consultation with the community to gather information regarding their perspectives and experiences of CFMs, as a basis for better tailoring structures and processes to their preferences
- Consider providing cultural, linguistic and behavioral training to staff and volunteers involved in gathering community feedback and complaints to improve community perceptions and experiences of CFMs



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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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