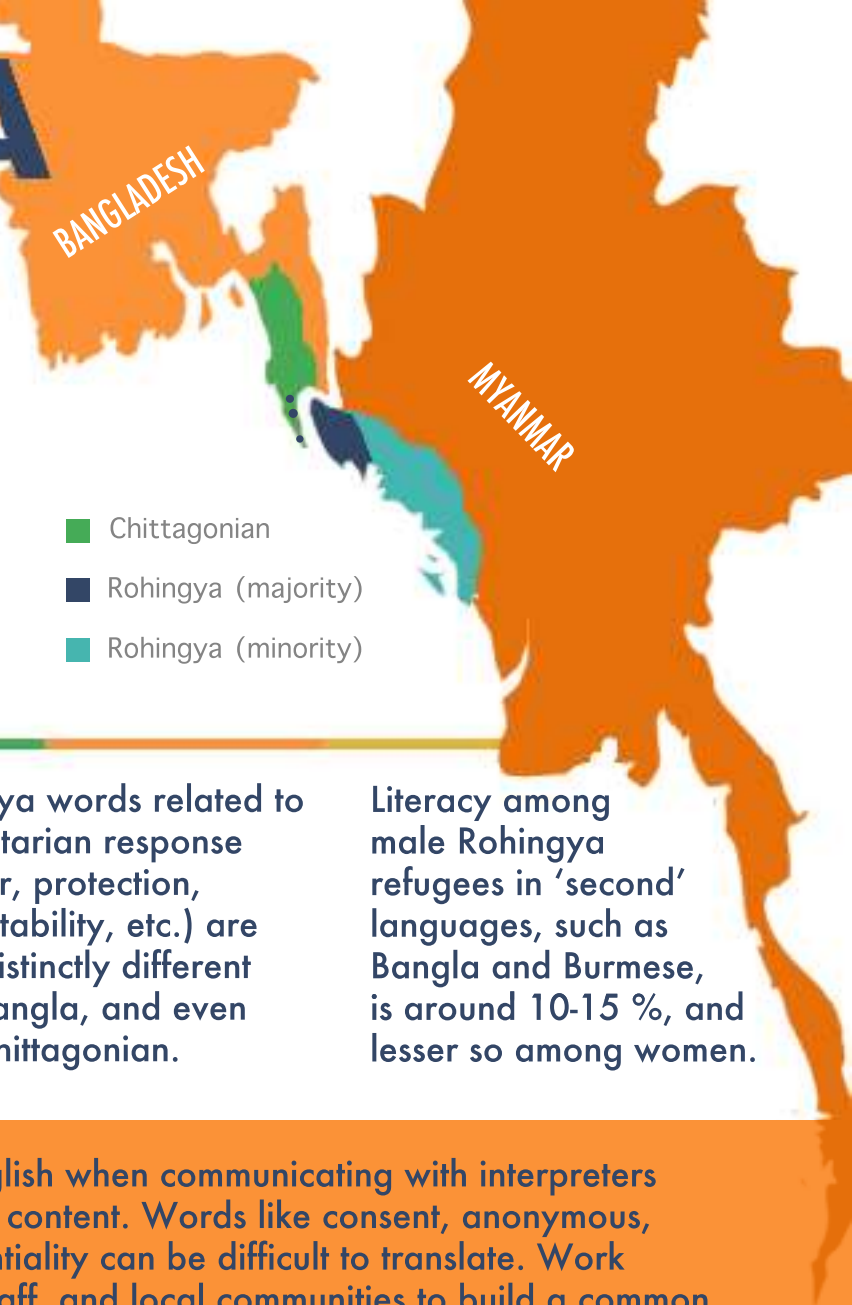


ROHINGYA

language factsheet

Rohingya and Chittagonian are similar enough languages that speakers can broadly understand each other. However, differences in pronunciation and contact with other languages make certain words and concepts difficult to understand.



- Chittagonian
- Rohingya (majority)
- Rohingya (minority)

Rohingya is a spoken language without a standard written version. Attempts have been made to write Rohingya using Arabic, Urdu and Latin scripts, as well as Hanifi, a unique script developed for Rohingya.

Rohingya words related to humanitarian response (gender, protection, accountability, etc.) are often distinctly different from Bangla, and even from Chittagonian.

Literacy among male Rohingya refugees in 'second' languages, such as Bangla and Burmese, is around 10-15 %, and lesser so among women.



Avoid jargon and use plain English when communicating with interpreters and developing communication content. Words like consent, anonymous, compensate, and even confidentiality can be difficult to translate. Work with interpreters, programme staff, and local communities to build a common understanding of terminology.

Complement all written information with pictures, and use audio and video communication where possible.

Speak slowly and clearly to reduce misunderstanding. Ensure Chittagonian interpreters are aware of dialect differences. Refer to glossaries to aid communication.



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Read the Rohingya Zuban story map for more information. <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/rohingya-zuban/>
Contact bangladesh@translatorswithoutborders.org for language needs in Bangladesh, or info@translatorswithoutborders.org to discuss overall language services and resources for communicating with communities in need.

Digging Deeper into ROHINGYA



Why does this matter?

Humanitarian information is ineffective if it is not understood. In the case of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, there are many areas of misunderstanding. For example, Rohingya and Chittagonian communities use different words for common concepts such as 'safety' and 'pregnancy.' Language and communication barriers can greatly reduce the quality of two-way dialogue between programme staff and community based volunteers, affecting vulnerable populations, particularly women, elderly and marginalised groups.

Are there Rohingya dialects?

Many interpreters aiding the humanitarian efforts are local Chittagonian speakers. Chittagonian, like Rohingya, is a spoken language with no written form. The Chittagonian spoken in the Cox's Bazar area is closely related to Rohingya, however there are some accent and pronunciation differences between the two. While Chittagonians consider their language to be a regional dialect of Bangla, it (like Rohingya), is not mutually intelligible with Bangla. If working with Chittagong interpreters from outside of Cox's Bazar district, it is important to make them aware of dialect differences.

Can Rohingyas understand Chittagonian?

Yes. Depending on what contact the community has had with other cultures influences the words they have adopted into their language. For instance, the language of the settled Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh has evolved over several decades to incorporate Chittagonian and Bangla words. Communities along the Rakhine coast also have exposure to Chittagonian. More urban Rohingya communities throughout the state have greater exposure to Rakhine and Burmese. As most Rohingya communities are deeply religious, they have also adopted many Arabic and Persian words into their daily vocabulary.

Do Rohingyas speak other languages?

In addition to Rohingya language, many Rohingya refugees are conversant in one or more of the following languages: Burmese, Rakhine, Chittagonian, Bangla, Urdu, and English. However, socioeconomics plays a large role in exposure and competence in these languages. Rohingya speakers who attended schools in Myanmar are more familiar with Burmese and English. Earlier refugees in Bangladesh can often speak Bangla. Women, who often have had no schooling, are far less likely to understand a second language.

How can TWB help ?

Translators without Borders (TWB) has set up a growing network of Rohingya, Chittagonian, Burmese, and Bangla translators and language experts who support organizations by identifying language barriers, simplifying text, providing audio and written translations, and humanitarian terminology development. TWB also hosts 'Interpreter Connect' training workshops and publishes resources to address linguistic concerns of the humanitarian community.