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WHAT MATTERS?

Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin
on Rohingya Response

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Lack of light, waste and waterlogging affecting the Rohingya camps

Source: Feedback from listening groups during May and June 2018. Around 250 listener groups meet weekly to listen to a range of [radio programmes](#) and narrowcasts. The group facilitators collect feedback about the listeners' current needs, priorities and concerns.

Many people – particularly those living in **Balukhali**, **Lambashia** and **Thangkhali** camps – are concerned about availability of shelter making materials. They note that most of the makeshift houses are located on the hills or at the corner of the hills and are worried that heavy rainfall might cause landslides. People are concerned about a perceived lack of availability of bamboo and ropes,

which they feel they need to make their shelter stronger or to shift their shelter to comparatively flat land.

Many of the Rohingya community are regularly requesting solar panels and torches so that they can move around safely in the camps at night. Moreover, people feel that the roads inside the camps are narrow, and that more light

is needed for regular movement. Due to the rainy season, communities have noted that roads inside the camps are in bad condition, as most of the roads are water logged. They report that rain water is also entering their houses, worsening their living conditions. According to community feedback, these problems are most severe in **Thangkhali**.

Environmental pollution is another concern for the Rohingya community and seen as a key reason for deteriorating living conditions. Lack of a proper drainage or waste disposal system is one of the most prominent issues raised by the Rohingya community. This is the key concern in **Lambashia**, where the community report that canals have become waste dumping

zones and the excessive amount of waste is causing drains to block and overflow. Community members say that open spaces in the camps are also being used as waste disposal zones that create a bad smell, making living in the camp intolerable. Rohingya people say they are suffering from breathing problems due to a lack of fresh air. Therefore, the community is requesting better drainage and waste disposal systems.

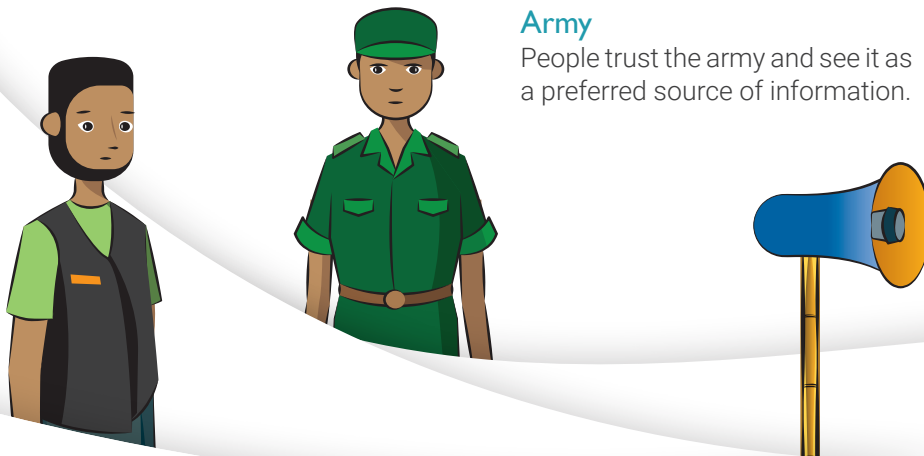
An additional concern for the Rohingya community living in **Balukhali** and **Thaingkhali** are the toilets. According to the community, most of the toilets are not usable and cause an unpleasant smell in the camps.

Information centres and television are becoming a more important part of the information mix

Source: Weekly FGDs done by BBC Media Action from May to July 2018. Six small FGDs have been conducted in Ukhia- five groups were conducted with males and one group was conducted with females.

Trusted information sources

In the Rohingya camps, people get information from several sources. However, they have some trusted and preferred sources from which they prefer to get information. These preferences have changed over time: the current favoured sources, as suggested by recent research, are summarised here.



Army

People trust the army and see it as a preferred source of information.

Mahjis

People rely on mahjis to get information. However, some Rohingya people think that, rather than simply using mahjis to disseminate raw information, people from humanitarian organisations should discuss, in advance, what they want to communicate with the mahji and two or three older people from the community. If the information is shared, through the mahji, after first being discussed with the elders in the community, people believe that the information will be more reliable.

Public announcement

People said that a good way for NGOs to disseminate information is through public announcements at the mosques, as people trust that source.

“ If Volunteers of different NGOs disseminate information through loudspeakers at the mosque, everybody will believe it.”

- Male group, Camp 7

Information centre

Some Rohingya people prefer to get information from information centres rather than getting it from a mahji, because they perceive that some mahjis are involved in corruption.

“ It would be good if an information centre is built in the camp, in that way people will get all the necessary information provided by different NGOs.’
- Male group, Camp 7



Information needs

People expressed that they are getting sufficient information on issues related to food distribution, shelter materials, antenatal care, vaccination, medicine distribution and doctors visits. However, people expressed that there are some topics that they need more information about. These needs are:



News about repatriation



Weather forecast



How to build houses that will be resilient to monsoon weather

“

We need information about how to make the houses strong enough for monsoon, we also need weather forecast.”

- Male group, Camp-10



Television

More and more Rohingya people now watch television in tea stalls in the camps. They think that getting information through television is easier and trustworthy.

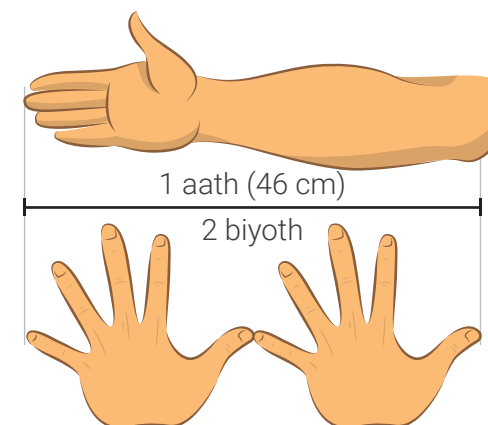
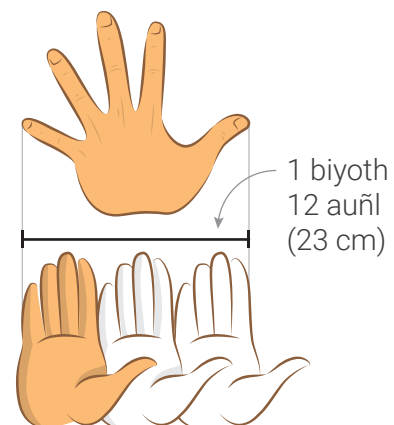
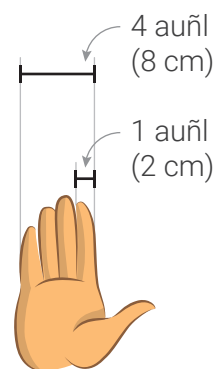
A medley of measurements

The Rohingya community uses a combination of measurement systems (**maaf-zufor thorika**). They use indigenous or localized systems, standardized Indian systems, the British Imperial System, and more recently, the metric system. In this issue, we explain how the Rohingya community uses these measurement systems.

The Bangladeshi government, as well as humanitarians, officially use the metric system for any form of measurement. Although these units are slowly but surely being adopted by the Rohingya-speaking community, it's good to be aware of the current variation because this assortment of measurement systems reflects several socioeconomic factors. Women, elderly people, people who have not had access to education, and rural populations tend to use the indigenous systems. Those with any formal education or involved in trade will have exposure to the imperial or metric systems. Colonialism brought with it European measuring systems, which were adapted piecemeal by the local populations according to their needs. Myanmar was one of only three nations that did not adopt the metric system. Because of this, whatever knowledge the Rohingya community has of the metric system has come via their Chittagonian and Bangla speaking neighbours.

Length and distance

Similar to the origins of some western systems, the Rohingya community uses the body as a useful measuring tool. The most basic unit of measuring length is the **auñil** ('finger' or 'digit'). This is literally the width of one finger. Twelve **auñil** makes one **biyoth** (or **bigoth**), or the measure from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the pinky on an extended palm. Two **biyoth** make one **'aath'**



or 'hand' which is roughly the measurement from the elbow to the tip of the fingers. *Biyoth* and *aath* are the most commonly used length measurements. While these terms are used by the Rohingya community, they originate from this region, so you may also hear older Chittagonian speakers using these measurements as well. Though there have been attempts at standardizing these units, many people still use their own bodies for measurement purposes. The only standard measurement for length is the **goz**, which equates to a yard, or approximately one meter.

These measurements are particularly important in the construction of shelters. Metric measurements of tarpaulin and bamboo poles may not be well understood by households, who may be more comfortable with *biyoth* or *aath*. Interestingly, the height of shelters and hills, or the lengths of bridges, etc., are often spoken of in units of "foot", though the community may not particularly know the ratios of the measurements (i.e. that 12 inches equals a foot).

Distance is usually expressed and measured using time (minutes, hours, etc.). For example, people may say a mosque or food distribution centre is five minutes around the hill, as opposed to saying 500 meters away. This may be useful to keep in mind when directing community members to nearby services. Longer distances, however, are generally expressed in miles by both the Rohingya and Chittagonian speaking communities.

Weight and volume

Dry weights and liquid volumes are also measured using a mix of systems. However, indigenous units for weights and volumes are widely used regardless of education level or other socioeconomic factors. In this system, **sher** (which equals about one liter or one kilogram) and **pawa** (one quarter of a *sher*, or 250ml/g) are the most commonly used units. The Rohingya community also borrowed a unit of measurement from the Burmese called the **bista** (or **bissa**), a unit of mass equaling about 1.7 kilograms. Smaller measurements are increasingly

being measured in grams. Medicine, for example, is widely understood in grams (or in teaspoons and milliliters for liquid medicine).

These differences are crucial when addressing WASH or healthcare topics. For example, in Bangladesh, you might have noticed that the government uses *pawa* for the directions on standard oral rehydration salt (ORS) packets. Though the Rohingya people are familiar with the *pawa* (*fawa*) unit, they also use a more localized measurement unit, **golosh** (derived from English “glass”). The commonly used orange ORS packets distributed in the camps suggest to mix the powder with two *pawa* (500ml), when explaining this to the community you could consider providing information in both the metric and indigenous systems, (eg. ‘Mix the ORS sachet with 500ml or two glasses/*golosh* of water’). This is also useful to keep in mind when talking about water purification or nutritional supplements that need to be combined with safe drinking water.

In a Rohingya market you will also find several even more localized measuring systems. For example, a used milk tin is a common unit of measurement for 250 grams, i.e. one kilo of rice equals four tins.

A regional medley

The neighboring Chittagonian and Bangla speaking communities use a similar mixed measurement system. The names of the units in indigenous Indian systems derive from Sanskrit, so there are similarities between Rohingya and Bangla, and particularly, with Chittagonian, for the names of the units. Words of English origin for units are often pronounced with local accents in the three languages (for example, litre is pronounced “lee-taar” and kilograms (kg) is “kei-zee”).

Rohingya Name of Unit	Bangla Name of Unit	Approximate Metric Equivalence	Notes
Auñl	Angul	2 cm	One auñl/angul is the width of an index finger
Biyoth	Bighoth	23 cm	12 auñl/angul makes one biyoth/bighoth
'Aath	Haath	46 cm	2 biyoth/bighoth makes one 'aath/haath
Goz	Goj	0.91 Meters	This is the central term for 'yard' in the region
Fawa	Pawa	233 grams	4 pawa equals one sher
Sher	Sher	933 grams	Both dry and liquid volumes are measured with same units
Bissa	(Not Applicable)	1.7 kilograms	This unit was borrowed from the Burmese measurement system

BBC Media Action, Internews, 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.

The work is being delivered in partnership with IOM, the UN migration agency, and is funded by the UK Department for International Development.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions regarding *What Matters?*, you are welcome to get in touch with team by emailing info@cxbfeedback.org