

With rain, Rohingya people are becoming more worried about their shelters

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## Covid-19 information reaching many, but not all: Some community and religious leaders need more information

*Source:* To understand current community perspectives and experiences in the camps, particularly in relation to information needs in the context of Covid-19, BBC Media Action and Translators without Borders conducted interviews over the phone with five men and three women from the Rohingya community and with four imams and three mahjis in the camps. Interviews took place on 13 and 14 July.

# WHAT MATTERS?

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Recent feedback from Rohingya community members, imams and mahjis suggests that most people in the camps are well aware of the risks posed to the community by Covid-19. Everyone interviewed knew about the virus and, for the most part, were aware of what they needed to do to protect themselves from it. However, not everyone has all the information they feel they need.

### Covid-19 concerns and information sources

Most community members and community and religious leaders interviewed were concerned about the Covid-19 situation and its impacts on them, their families and the community. Male Rohingya community members reported more positive perspectives about the current situation, with four of the five expressing optimism about the low number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in the camps. Female interviewees, however, all reported feeling afraid about the coronavirus situation.

Male community members said that they were receiving information from a variety of sources, including NGOs, the internet, conversations in public spaces such as tea stalls, and radio, loudspeaker or megaphone announcements. The three female respondents said that they received Covid-19 information from fewer sources, particularly loudspeaker and megaphone announcements (their preferred source) and neighbours. Given that the audio messages generally come from official sources, especially NGOs, Rohingya respondents (from research here and in What Matters 39) considered the information they are receiving from these speakers to be more consistently accurate and reliable than other more informal channels.

Both male and female interviewees, as well as imams and mahjis, have a sound understanding of key Covid-19 terminology. These include the Rohingya terms for concepts such as 'quarantine' (*mainshore alog gori rakon*), 'self-quarantine' (*nize baze alog oi takon*), 'isolation' (*coronavirus oile sira gori rakon*) and 'isolation centre / facility' (*coronavirus oile sira gori rakibar zaga*).

## People turn to community and religious leaders for information

“ People mostly ask me about coronavirus symptoms and transmission.”

– Mahji, mid 40s, camp 1

“ Mostly people ask me for information when they are sick. They ask what are the symptoms of coronavirus and what to do when someone is infected. In my experience, I think people are serious about this virus. They are concerned about how to avoid that virus.”

– Imam, early 40s, camp 1

“ We provide information regarding the coronavirus. We provide it when we see people gathering, or in the mosque.”

– Mahji, late 30s, camp 12



Mahjis and imams reported that they were regularly approached by people in the camps for information about Covid-19. They said that people particularly wanted to know how the virus is spread and the symptoms of the virus, in a context of persistent rumours and uncertainty. Mahjis and imams reported receiving information from a variety of sources, particularly NGOs and CiCs. Most said that they were receptive to this guidance and shared the information with the community. However, at least one mahji interviewed said that he did not believe that there were any Covid-19 cases in the camps and was also sceptical about Covid-19 advice provided by a major health sector NGO. One imam wrongly believed that the recent rains had washed away Covid-19 from the camps.

“ People mostly ask me whether the coronavirus is real, or just a plan from the government of Bangladesh to keep us in lockdown in the camp permanently. People also ask about the rumour that people will be killed in NGO hospitals if they are infected with the virus.”

– Mahji, late 30s, camp 12

“ I think we don't have coronavirus in the camps because the rain has wiped out this virus. I have not seen anyone infected with coronavirus in the camps.”

– Imam, mid-50s, camp 3

“ I think the chances of coronavirus infection is decreasing now. I heard there were some confirmed cases in the camps but it's now no more.”

– Imam, early 30s, camp 1

“ I think we are not really afraid of coronavirus in the camps. I haven't seen anyone infected with coronavirus in the camps.”

– Mahji, late 30s, camp 4



## Mahjis and imams need the tools to respond to community information needs

Despite varying levels of concern, all community members interviewed were aware of the risks posed to them and their community by Covid-19. Mahjis and imams reported that community members regularly approached them to request more information about Covid-19 or to check the validity of rumours they had heard. However, not all the leaders had the knowledge and understanding required to provide advice on Covid-19, whilst most wanted more regular and detailed updates. Given their role as providers of information, it is essential that there is both consistency and accuracy in the information they are providing to the community. In order to support them in this role, it is important for mahjis and imams to be provided with regular updates on the Covid-19 situation, including guidance on how to respond to community information needs.



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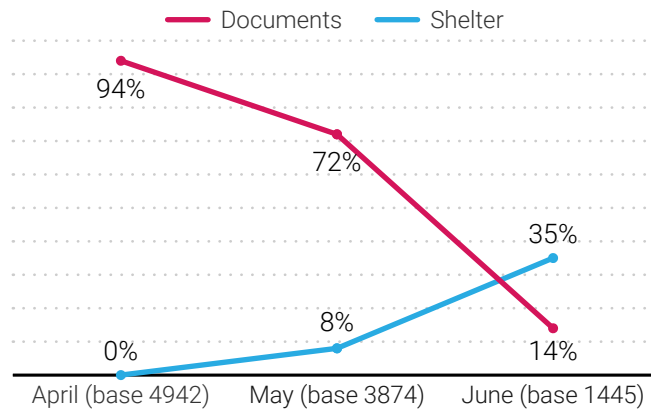
Rohingya people have predominantly mentioned concerns about documents over the past 2-3 months but, more recently, concerns related to shelters have started to rise.

*Source:* Community feedback collected in camps 1E, 1W, 2E, 2W, 3, 4, 4 Ext, 5, 6, 7, 8E, 8W, 11, 12, 18, 20, 20 Ext, 26, Kutupalong RC and Noyapara RC between April and June 2020 by Save the Children, DRC and UNHCR (base: 10,261). To better understand some of the concerns raised, BBC Media Action spoke to people from different camps. This fortnight, we conducted seven telephone interviews: three with Rohingya men and four with Rohingya women.

In the last 2-3 months, Rohingya people say that they have been struggling with their shelter. In the community feedback data, people raised a range of concerns related to shelter and shelter materials. Some people said that, due to landslides, the walls and roofs of their shelters had been damaged and asked for help in relocating their shelter. Some people mentioned that their shelter had been partially damaged and said that they needed a shelter upgrading kit, bamboo and/or tarpaulin to repair their shelter. The community feedback data also

suggests that Rohingya community people living in camps 8E, 8W and 12 had more concerns related to shelter than others.

Concerns related to documentation and shelter over time



In the telephone interviews, Rohingya men and women both talked about their shelter related problems. They said that the current rainy season is making the condition of their shelter worse. In many cases, they said that their shelter was already in bad condition, due to damaged tarpaulin and bamboo or soil erosion of the surrounding embankments, and that the rain was making it difficult for them to stay in their shelter as the rainwater pours inside.

“ Rainwater pours into our shelter while it rains. The materials used in the shelter are old, the tarpaulin is torn, and termites ate the bamboo. Because of this, it is difficult for us to stay. Sometimes we need to take shelter in our neighbours home.”

– Woman, camp 1E, Ukhiya

People also said that it had been some time since they had received any shelter materials. They mentioned that they had informed the authorities, community volunteers or mahjis about their need for new materials but that it was taking more time to resolve any issues due to the coronavirus situation.

“ Some volunteers came to my home to hear about my problems. I told him about my problems, and he listed these down. It's been a while, but I have not received any solutions.”

– Man, camp 27 (Jadimura), Teknaf

In addition, men talked about their concerns regarding the materials provided in the standard shelter kit. They said that they had received 40-60 small pieces of bamboo, 2-3 big pieces of bamboo and 2 tarpaulins, but felt that it was very difficult to repair their shelter with these materials. They said that they needed 7-8 large pieces of bamboo, more pieces of small bamboo and some money, to repair their shelter properly.

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.

The work is funded by EU humanitarian aid and 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 the team by emailing [info@cxbfeedback.org](mailto:info@cxbfeedback.org)