

Safety & security,
a major Rohingya concern

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Rohingya people concerned about safety and security

The congestion in the camps has evolved into a safety and security concern. Recent feedback from camp residents has detailed numerous concerns over safety issues at night and conflicts over resource and facility use. In one quarter of listener group sessions analysed, safety and security issues were a key topic of discussion. Safety and security issues appear to be a particular concern for residents of camps 24 (Leda) and 25 (Ali Khali), who complained about the lack of 24-hour security.

Source: 1,981 listener groups, engaging 9,281 individuals, conducted by IOM, Bangladesh Betar and ACF from August to November 2018. This feedback was collected from camps 1, 2, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 22, 23, 24 and 25. Listener groups included an even spread of men, women, adults and children and around 10% of participants were particularly vulnerable (pregnant women, lactating mothers, older people and people with disabilities). In addition, focus group discussions were conducted in camp 24 to explore these issues in more depth.

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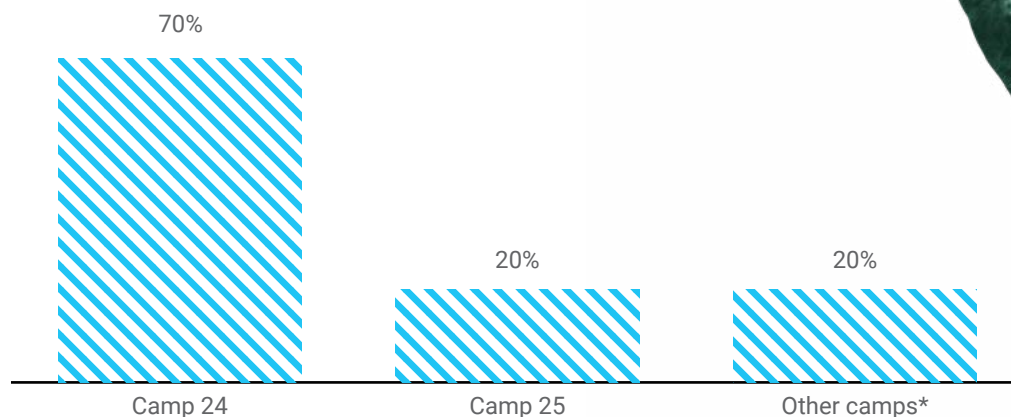


Figure 1: Concern regarding safety and security issues in the camp (N=445)

*Other camps include camps 1, 2, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 22 and 23.

Internews' feedback was collected between January 05 and January 10 by 20 Community Correspondents and one feedback manager using the Kobo Collect app in camps 1E, 1W, 2E, 2W, 3, 4, and 4-extension. In total, 230 interactions have been analysed to highlight significant concerns and questions from the Rohingya community. Among these data, 87 related to safety and security concerns. Feedback and concerns are collected in the Rohingya language using English and Bangla scripts.

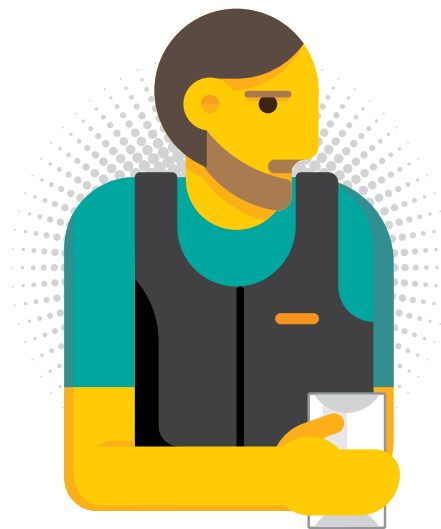
Rohingya respondents reported safety and security concerns on the following:

- Intimidation and forcible seizure of distributed items by block leaders and powerful families
- Internal conflict over improper disposal of waste as a health and safety concern
- Tension with the host community, which has turned abusive and violent, particularly for those who collect firewood
- Worry about using latrines, washrooms and other facilities at night because of visibility issues in the dark and concerns about heightened levels of harassment and violence at this time by women, children, and older people

Recent reporting indicates that internal clashes between refugees are perceived to pose a security concern in some blocks. Tension between block leaders or mahjis has led to ongoing conflicts over the sharing of resources distributed by humanitarian organisations in the camps. A camp resident describes it as:

“ The mahji in our block is doing an injustice with us which we are not tolerating. He prepares his own list and takes all the relief. We are all deprived of our relief items. The relatives of mahjis get the things but we don't....In the mahji's house they bring milk but we don't get a single packet of milk. This is really important for us. Since we came, we didn't get a water pot, floor mat, pillow, and necessary utensils which are essential for us. Considering the mahji is Rohingya, if the mahji treats us differently, who should we share our concerns with?”

– Woman, 42, camp 1E



Respondents described instances where distributed supplies were not equitably shared among the blocks but kept by a select few. For example, mahjis have been accused of holding on to milk packets that are given to them by humanitarian organisations to distribute to each household in their block. Community members also said that mahjis and certain prominent families use force and intimidation

to ensure they get preferential access to resources and facilities, or charge people for use of facilities. Another respondent further explains the power dynamics and double standards within the camp:

“ In our block there is a family whom we can't speak with. They are a powerful family. There were also powerful in Burma. They threaten people and hurt them. No one can talk to them. If any relief comes in the block they do not receive it through distribution process, they always take it forcefully. Mahjis can't talk with them; they are scared of those people. During distribution, mahjis give them the priority as they are powerful people.”

– Man, 40, camp 2E

A lack of facilities to dispose of rubbish and disputes over water usage rights have created a number of conflicts and could create health issues in the camps. Several Rohingya community members reported having disputes with their neighbours over waste disposal and drainage clogging. Quarrels have started because there is nowhere to put trash and people do not want the trash to be dumped near their house.

“ ...three of the families are throwing out trash in the block. During the night they come and throw the garbage at the edge of our shed. We can't stay at home because of the bad smell coming from that garbage. We always tell people not to throw garbage everywhere, but still people come at night and throw garbage stealthily. If we confront them, they get into a fight with us. We have shared the matter with the mahjis, but they don't listen to mahjis. We have told the NGO's, they noted it down but no steps were taken.”

– Man, 32, camp 3

Residents also raised concerns over the inadequate supply of drinking water, which they say has also become a cause of conflict.

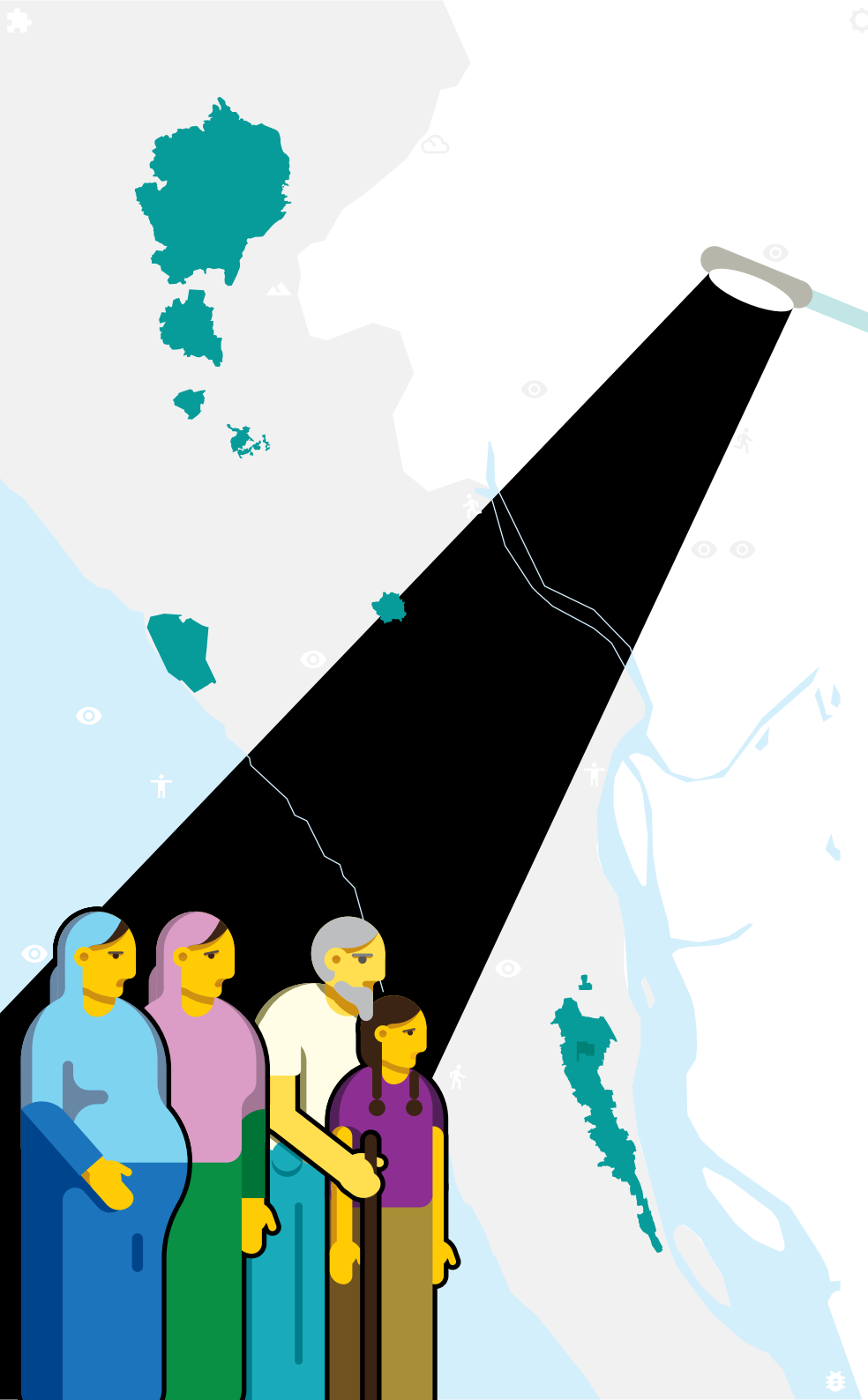
“ One NGO told us, whenever you need water you can collect it and drink it. If we go to collect water in another block, the people living there say that they have funded some repairs to the tube wells and they ask us to pay. If we don't give them money, they quarrel with us...Young children in our house can't collect water in the daytime so they have to go at night.”

– Woman, 45, camp 1W

We also received feedback about street lights. The lack of lights was raised by residents as a protection and safety concern for all sections of the population, i.e., children, women and older people as well as men. Here are a few snapshots of feedback from the community:

“ At night we are scared to go to the washroom as there is no street light on the way. Older people and children are scared to go to the washroom at night as there is no light.”

– Woman, 55, camp 3



“ In our block there is no street light so we face a challenge to go out at night. It has been difficult for our older people to perform their prayers.”

– Man, 46, camp 4

“ The whole block is dark at night and young boys roam around. This is one of the reasons why young girls are scared of going to fetch water at night. If you ask why, if a boy likes a girl and if the parents don't agree about that relationship, the boy follows the girl at night when she goes for water. So the boy may take advantage of darkness and abduct the girl.”

– Man, 46, camp 4

The collected feedback suggests that fear of going outside after dark is a principal concern for many refugees especially for more vulnerable demographics. Many respondents mentioned that even when a block had solar lights installed, they are often no longer functioning.

Due to a lack of privacy at washrooms during the day, many women take showers at night. However, reports of assaults on women who go out to shower at night have made them much more apprehensive about doing this. The lack of adequate lights and washing and latrine facilities for women near their houses is a significant barrier to personal safety and security.

Older people in the camps also struggle to move around at night because they cannot see well in the dark and some also have concerns about getting injured while walking or being vulnerable to harassment. Feedback also shows that many men are scared to move around their blocks at

night as they are afraid they could also be victims of attack. This limitation of movement when it is dark makes normal activities like collecting water and maintaining hygienic practices very challenging.

Listener group discussions in camp 23 highlighted that sexual harassment is another key concern for women and girls. Women from female-headed families in particular said they feared rape, abuse or sexual harassment of their young girls. A parent from camp 24, mentioned that girls sometimes had to collect firewood from the surrounding forest or hills, as there are no boys in the family. The parents said they feared that the girl would be abused, raped or sexually harassed, particularly if collecting wood takes longer than usual for any reason and she is late returning.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data show that the Rohingya community, especially women, are worried about the safety of their children. In focus group discussions, women mentioned that they were worried about their children being kidnapped, hurt in quarrels, getting into fights and being hit by moving vehicles while collecting rubbish to use as fuel. People said that they had become more concerned about their children's safety because of a perceived increase of incidents of missing children in the camps.

“ A kidnapper cut through the tarpaulin of a house and stole two babies. After that, the neighbours chased him. He was caught in a field and the babies were brought back safely.”

– Woman, 26-40, camp 24

Discussing safety and security in the camps

There are many natural (Allahr-diya mosiyot) and artificial (bondar-banaya mosiyot) safety concerns in the camps. Therefore, it is important to use correct terminology regarding safety and security in the multiple languages involved in this crisis. Some words concerning safety and security issues in the Rohingya language are similar to Chittagonian (see the chart here), however, many Chittagonian terms are borrowed from standard Bangla, which may be not understood by the Rohingya community. This can make conversations about these issues challenging and there is room for misunderstandings and misinterpretation.

Word focus: hefazot

The new Rohingya arrivals often use hefazot as a catch-all word for anything related to safety and security. Depending on the context, it could mean 'safe', 'protection', 'guard', 'security', or a number of other security-related terms. Chittagonian interpreters and field workers did not initially understand hefazot, as they use the Bangla-derived word nirafot for these safety-related terms. As hefazot and its many meaning can be tricky to understand and use, field workers should give context and clear examples when discussing anything related to safety and security.

English	Rohingya	Chittagonian	Bangla
safe	hefazot	nirafot	nirapod
unsafe	mosiboitta	onirafot	bipodjonok
problem	mushkil	oshubide	shomoshya
natural hazard	allah'r diya mosiyot	allah'r diya bifod	prakritik durjog
man-made hazard	bondar-banaya mosiyot	bondar-banaya mosiyot	manusher toiri durjog
emergency	zoruri halot	zoruri obosta	joruri obsosta
open space	kula zaga	kula zaga	khola jaiga
police	fulish	fulish	pulish
complaint	taing goron	nalish	nalish
being afraid of	doron	doron	bhoi paowa

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 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