

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



Rohingya Refugee Emergency

Food Security Update

Highlights:

- Nearly 9 out of 10 displaced households were able to maintain or improve their food consumption to acceptable levels thanks to increased assistance levels and the transition to vouchers
- During the monsoon season, displaced households resorted to negative livelihood coping such as borrowing money to buy food, selling food assistance, sending children to work, and increased the use of asset depletion strategies by spending savings and selling productive assets
- More than half of the households in the host communities reported a deterioration of their food consumption from acceptable to borderline. Situation deteriorated due to a decreased mobility caused by the monsoons and to the impact of the influx on the labour market
- Preparedness measures implemented by WFP and its partners played a critical role in mitigating potential risks during the monsoon season



World Food
Programme

December 2018



BACKGROUND

Since August 2017, Cox’s Bazar (Bangladesh) experienced a massive influx of Rohingya refugees fleeing an outbreak of violence and human rights violation erupted in Rakhine State (Myanmar). The pace of the arrivals made this the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world, with Cox’s Bazar hosting the world’s largest refugee camp. As of October 2018, IOM estimates a total of 923,000 Rohingya refugees, of which 710,000 (77%) arrived since August 2017.

The influx further deteriorated the already fragile situation of one of the poorest and most vulnerable districts in Bangladesh, characterized by high under-nutrition rates, food insecurity and lack of access to basic services. In December 2017, Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA) estimated that over 80 percent of the total refugee population is relying on life-saving assistance. To complicate an already critical situation the monsoon and cyclone season put the life of nearly one million households at risk of landslides and flooding.

OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the Light Food Security Monitoring (LFSM) is to provide an overview of the food security and vulnerability situation in Cox’s Bazar during and after the monsoon season. The analysis builds upon multiple data sources, including the baseline Refugee Influx Emergency Vulnerability Assessment (REVA) and two rounds of food security monitoring data implemented between May-Jun and Aug-Sept. Findings are based on a total sample of 327 households and analysis was performed using a panel methodology to assess the differences over time and over the same individuals. This work does not intend to provide a prevalence of food insecurity as the sample is not representative for displaced populations and host communities. A follow-up emergency vulnerability assessment (REVA) will have the objective to update food insecurity prevalence for both groups.

710,000 

new Rohingya arrivals
since 25 August 2017

923,000 

total Rohingya population
in Cox's Bazar

New Arrivals (since 25 Aug 2017)	104	32%
Unregistered protracted	87	27%
Registered protracted	56	17%
Host community	80	24%
TOTAL	327	100%



FOOD CONSUMPTION

The analysis of food consumption patterns revealed two opposite trends. A comparison between the baseline and the latest monitoring round (Aug-Sept) shows that 91 percent of displaced households was able to maintain or improve the food consumption status (Figure 2). Despite a slight deterioration from Round 1 to Round 2, displaced households show an improving trend compared to the baseline (Figure 1), mainly due to the provision of sustained food assistance.

On the contrary, a worsening trend was found for the host communities, which show an increased number of households with poor/borderline food consumption, passing from 31 percent at the baseline to 80 percent in Round 2. In the latest round, only 20 percent of the households are found with an acceptable food consumption. A decreased mobility caused by the monsoons and the impact of the influx on the labour market could represent the main factors behind these negative trends.

Figure 1 – Average Food Consumption Score (FCS) trends

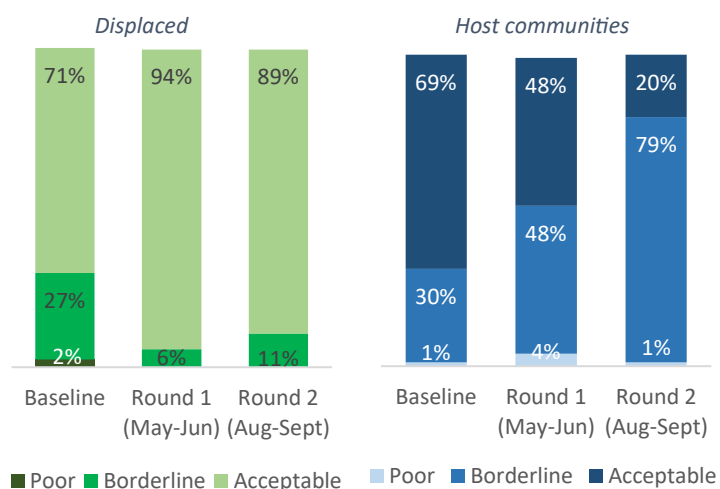
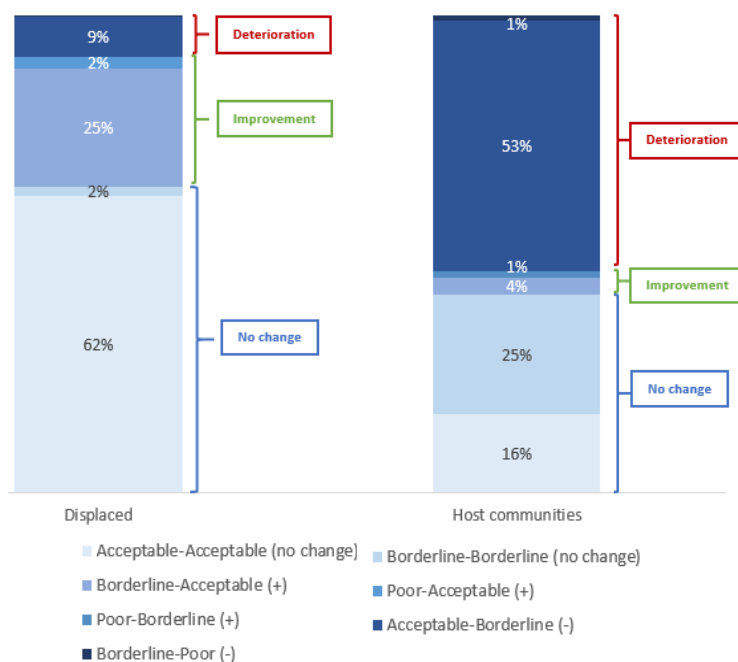


Figure 2 - Food consumption trends, Baseline vs Round 2 (Aug-Sept)



DIETARY DIVERSITY

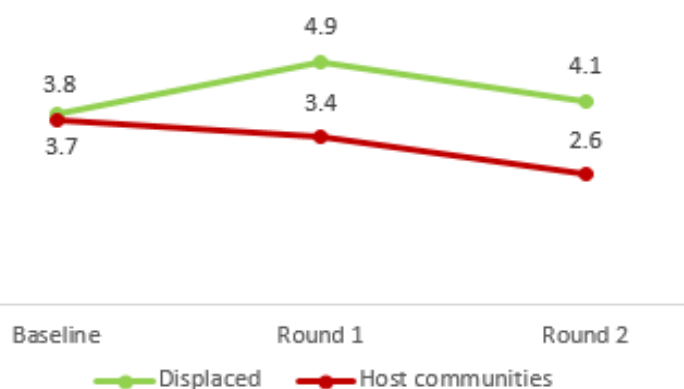
The analysis of dietary diversity patterns shows substantial differences between displaced households and host communities.

Overall, the analysis highlights a deterioration from round 1 to round 2 for both groups, which can be seen as a direct consequence of the negative impact of the monsoon.

Displaced households register, in the latest monitoring round, a higher dietary diversity compared to the baseline. The transition to vouchers and the sustained food assistance levels represent the main reasons behind this improvement.

On the contrary, a deteriorating trend is found for households in the host communities, which decreased their dietary diversity from 3.7 (baseline) to 2.6 (round 2), as shown in figure 3.

Figure 3 - Dietary diversity trends



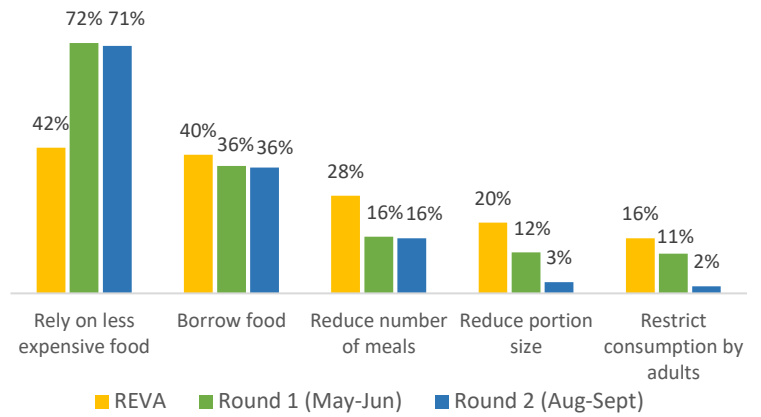
¹ Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to assess the change in the average Food Consumption Score (FCS). Results show a statistically significant change ($p < .000$) between the baseline and the two monitoring rounds. In particular, displaced households registered an increase in the average FCS from the Baseline (53.1) to Round 1 (61.7). On the contrary, a decreasing trend was found for households in the host communities, which saw their average FCS passing from 51.5 (Baseline) to 39.7 (Round 2).

FOOD COPING

Data reveal that displaced households significantly reduced the use of food-related coping behaviours over time.

When confronted with food shortfalls, seven out of ten displaced households reported relying on less expensive food, which represents the most adopted strategy. Figure 4 shows that the use of strategies entailing a reduction of food consumption is relatively low. Food assistance plays a crucial role in these regards by ensuring sustained food access among displaced households.

Figure 4 - Use of food coping strategies, displaced households



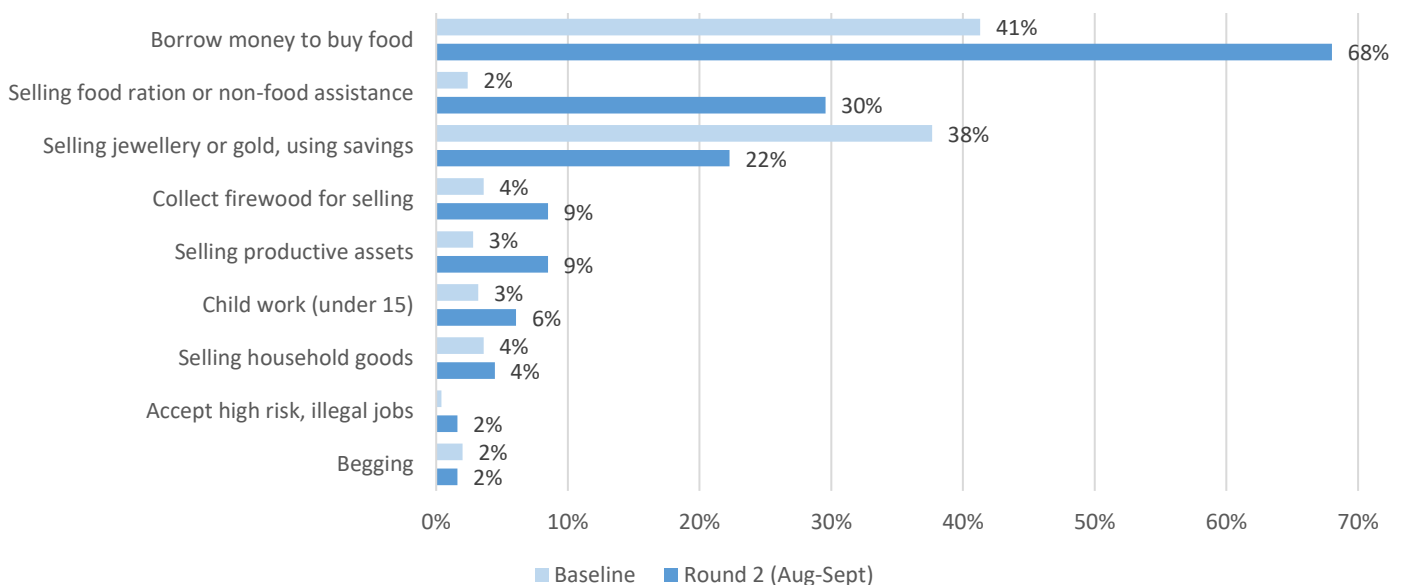
LIVELIHOOD COPING

Displaced households have largely depleted their assets including jewellery, savings and productive assets. This can entail long-term effects on their ability to meet basic needs. As a result, they significantly increased the borrowing of money to meet their food needs, as reported by nearly seven out of ten respondents. The sale of food rations or non-food assistance, a strategy used by only 2 percent of households at the baseline, observed a remarkable increase, becoming the second most used coping mechanism (30%) among the displaced. The strategies adopted by displaced households also include the use of emergency coping mechanisms such as begging (2%), accepting high risk/illegal jobs (2%) and an increased use of minors in income-generating activities (6%), which entail considerable protection risks.

The adoption of coping strategies among host communities does not show substantial changes compared to the baseline. Overall, borrowing money to buy food remains the most used coping strategy (48%), followed by the selling of jewellery and the use of savings (28%). The only increase is found for the selling of productive assets, which passed from 5% (baseline) to 9% (round 2).



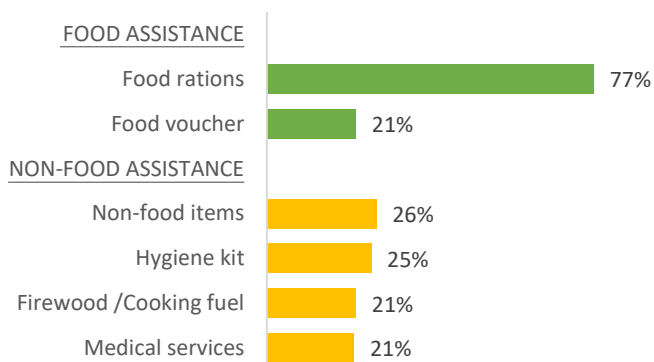
Figure 5 - Use of livelihood coping strategies



ASSISTANCE

Almost the entire displaced population (98%) benefitted from the provision of food assistance, which plays a crucial role in maintaining acceptable levels of food consumption. Assistance is mainly provided in the form of food rations. At the same time, food vouchers are being scaled-up and register an increase compared to the baseline. Displaced households also benefit from the provision of non-food assistance, particularly in the form of hygiene kits, cooking fuel, medical services and non-food items such as blankets, mosquito nets and cooking items.

Figure 6 – Provision of assistance (displaced), Round 2

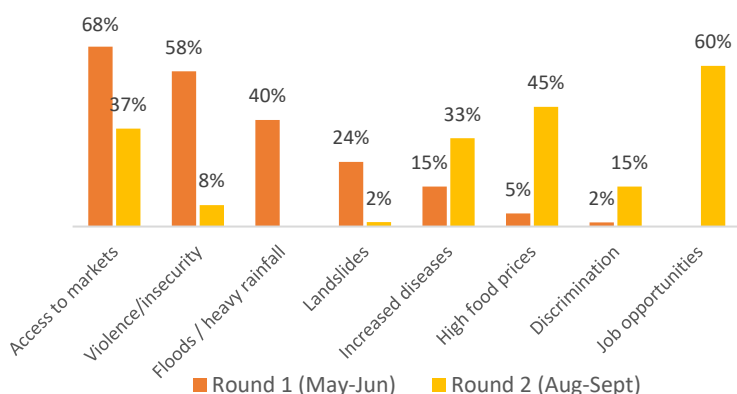


MAIN CONSTRAINTS

Several constraints have affected households' capacity to meet their basic needs. The analysis of the main challenges during the first round of monitoring (May-Jun), implemented during the core months of the monsoon season, reveals the impact of floods/heavy rains and landslides, as claimed by 40% and 24%, respectively. As a result, access to markets was affected. A higher sense of violence and insecurity during the monsoon season was also reported.

Data from the second monitoring wave (Aug-Sept) reveal a shift from monsoon-related constraints to factors affecting access to food. Despite an improved access to markets, the increased level of prices emerges as the second main constraint in the latest round. Households also reported an increased level of diseases, a possible consequence of heavy rains that might have compromised sanitary and health conditions and a general lack of job opportunities, which consistently emerges as one of the main unmet needs.

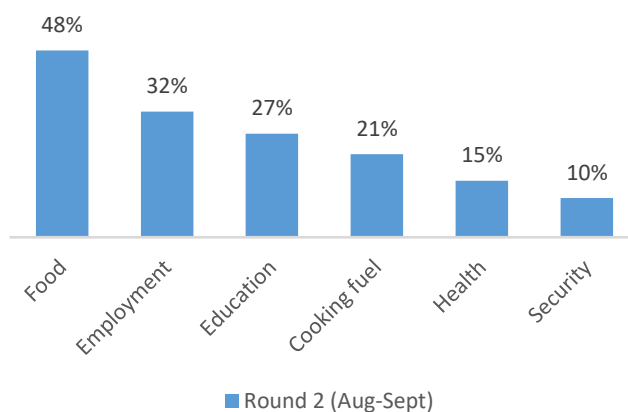
Figure 8 – Three main reported constraints (displaced) Round 1 vs Round 2



PERCEIVED PRIORITIES

The analysis confirmed a general inability to meet basic needs among the displaced, which further increases households' vulnerability to food insecurity. Monitoring data show that access to food represents the most significant priority expressed by nearly half of displaced households. Lack of jobs also emerges as a major challenge for the displaced, who lack access to income-generating activities to meet their food and other basic needs. Access to education services, which at the onset of the influx was not perceived as one of the main priorities, is currently the third most mentioned need. A key concern continues to be the lack of firewood, which is used as the main cooking fuel by nearly the totality of displaced households, also considering that its collection entails protection risks, particularly for the children, who are mainly involved in this activity. Finally, lack of health services and security also feature as some of the unmet needs.

Figure 7 – Basic needs (displaced households)



IN THE WORDS OF RESPONDENTS

Respondents were asked to share their thoughts on what could improve their food security and other basic needs situation. Their voices expressed a general inability to meet basic needs.

“I need food, firewood and necessary non-food items to build up a stronger house for the monsoon season”

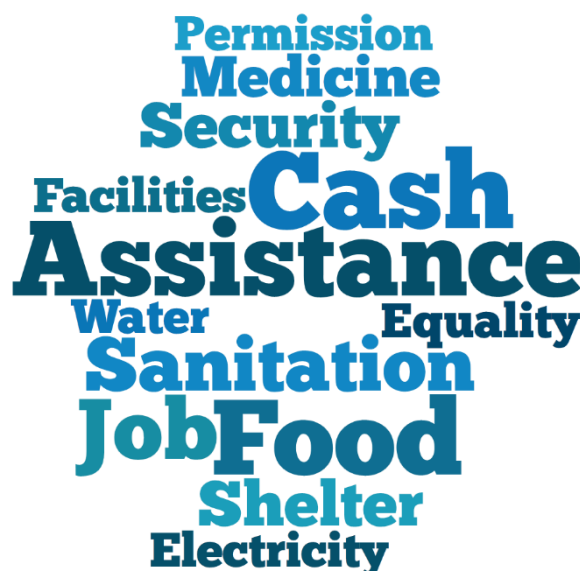
For the displaced, lack of food and money to buy it, limited firewood, the absence of income-generating opportunities and lack of access to health services and electricity were the most mentioned challenges affecting households' food security.

Households in the host communities expressed the need to receive food assistance and highlighted the limited job opportunities and the lack of cash as their main unmet needs.

Displaced



Host communities



MOVEMENTS AND INTENTIONS

Data show that nearly the totality of the interviewed households remained in their shelter during the monsoon season, with no major differences among the different sampled groups. Similarly, respondents expressed the preference to continue staying in their current place.

751 
reported incidents
(landslide, flooding...)

55,097 
monsoon-affected people

Source: IOM

These findings are in line with the latest situation reports on the ground and highlight the critical role of preparedness measures for the monsoon season together with cyclone readiness activities such as shelter upgrading and landslide/flood risk mitigation activities.

Action points

- Conduct a joint follow-up emergency vulnerability assessment (REVA) to assess the prevalence of food insecurity and other basic needs for both displaced population and host communities and inform targeting options
- In-depth analysis of the linkages between food insecurity and malnutrition to inform programme design



vam
food security analysis

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