



WFP in Cox's Bazar

Perception Analysis || WFP food assistance || COVID-19 response

Edition 1

As COVID-19 races across countries and continents, affecting over 1.2 million people globally, states across the world are scrambling to deal with what has become the most wide-spread pandemic outbreak since the 1918 Spanish flu. The refugee camps in Cox's Bazar due to its overwhelming population density remain highly vulnerable, with overstretched common resources and critical facilities. WFP continues unabated with emergency life-saving food and nutrition assistance and providing common logistics and emergency telecommunications support, ensuring thereby 100 percent of the refugee population can safely and continuously access critical food assistance.

In a first of its kind initiative, WFP conducted a series of targeted semi-structured interviews to gauge the perception of the different stakeholders at the ground level on the food assistance modalities and COVID-19 related precautionary measures undertaken. Thereby, WFP prioritises the importance of adopting a bottom-up approach when undertaking effective amendments to the programme (adaptive programming).

Government Actions: As per the directive by the Government of Bangladesh (Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission in Cox's Bazar) only life-saving assistance will continue in the camps. Bangladesh is under a nation-wide lockdown since 24 March which will continue until 25 April. This is to contain the spread of the virus through enforcing social distancing and minimum preventive measures.



WFP Response:

Temporary amendments to food assistance outlets in the camps



Only one person from each Rohingya household will be allowed to go to the food assistance sites to get food for the entire month.



Entitled refugees through the e-voucher modality will receive a fixed food basket for the month, which is pre-assessed to adequately meet the daily nutritional needs of the population.



Every person entering any food assistance site, including refugees and staff, must wash their hands and maintain a minimum 1 metre distance at all times.

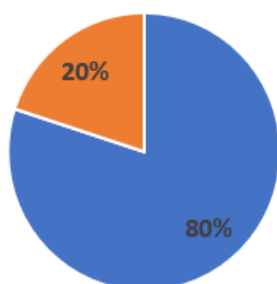


Temperature check for every person entering any food assistance site, including refugees and all staff. Enhanced communication-with-communities channels established.

Perception Overview:

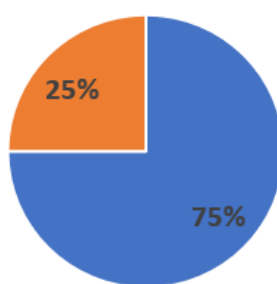
Covid-19 awareness and safety measures around food access and consumption

Engagement with volunteers/WFP staff



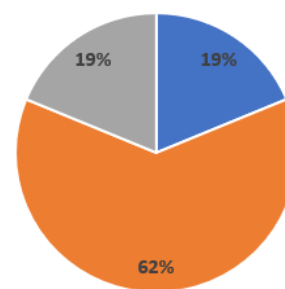
■ Yes ■ No

Awareness of WFP Programmatic changes



■ High ■ Low

Source of information among refugees



■ Other family members
■ Posters in the food assistance sites
■ Other

Note the above has been confounded through statistically significant sample size. For more information, contact the WFP Reports, Analysis and Information Management Unit: Baisali Mohanty (baisali.mohanty@wfp.org); Nour Salama (nour.salama@wfp.org)

General Observations

- High degree of awareness amongst beneficiaries and staff of COVID-19 symptoms and preventive measures.
- Majority of refugees and staff are aware of WFP programmatic changes in the food assistance sites.
- Refugees confirmed that communications material present at the food assistance sites is critical in getting the message across (especially pictorial representation).
- Most of the volunteers and retail staff were fully aware of the minimum preparedness measures that they needed to take at their personal as well as at the community level.
- Porters and volunteers (refugees and host community members) were aware of the preventive measures that needed to be implemented at the outlets/distribution sites, even those who weren't directly involved in the implementation.

Maintaining stability and enhancing social cohesion

- As reported, 88 percent of the total refugee population are dependent on external aid. Therefore, WFP recognizes the criticality of taking effective measures to enhance intra- and inter-communal harmony.
- At the e-voucher outlet, most beneficiaries have experienced enhanced ability to choose different food items. WFP is cognizant of beneficiary expectations and preferences, which are taken into consideration in every programme amendment.
- This has contributed significantly to enhancing social cohesion and intra-communal harmony.
- Also, as revealed through the semi-structured interviews, mutual trust and solidarity amongst staff from the host community and refugees is a critical indicator for ensuring trust and confidence in the aid-giving mechanism and the on-the-ground stakeholders.

Communication with Communities (CwC)

- WFP e-voucher outlets and food distribution sites are unique platforms to reach each and every refugee household /individual in the camps. WFP has therefore placed Communication with Communities (CwC) as a key priority.
- At this stage, CwC plays a critical role in:
 - o disseminating essential information to the targeted population;
 - o dispelling rumours and misinformation;
 - o ensuring coordination and connectivity between the different stakeholders on the ground.
- WFP proactively engages with the CwC inter-sectoral working group to ensure effective and accountable channels are maintained for messaging to the beneficiaries.
- Adopting a bottom-up, participatory approach for communication, WFP uses a range of creative mediums to reach out to people. This includes use of loudspeakers to disseminate key information and engagement with community/religious leaders.



Mohamed Islam, a refugee porter in an e-voucher outlet:

"At the outlet, we started very early taking the essential preventive measures. Everyone washes their hands regularly with soap and the entire shop is disinfected regularly. It is very important that we tell refugees what to do and what not to do because the camp is overcrowded, and the virus can spread very fast."



Nafiza Begum, a refugee at the e-voucher outlet:

"When I come to the outlet for food, I know that there are enough measures in place to ensure that I don't get the virus here or spread it to other people. There are hand washing stations and we are meant to not sit close to each other. I will go back and inform my family of the things I have learned here."



Shibaul Islam Hafikar, retail staff at the e-voucher outlet:

"I make sure to constantly tell refugees, my staff and volunteers who work here that maintaining minimum cleanliness at this point is critical. I tell all the retail staff to reiterate these messages to the people coming to the outlet; they need to remember this for good."

In Numbers

40,000	Average population density per square km in the camps (MSNA)
30,000	Individuals over 59 years (13,420 women/16,606 men)
88%	Of the refugee population dependent on external aid (REVA)
100%	Of Rohingya households receive WFP assistance

Cleanliness and minimum hygiene practices:

- In the overcrowded camp environment, the challenges of maintaining minimum preparedness and health and hygiene, which is critical to containing COVID-19, could be multifaceted.

“At first, I try to maintain hygiene and cleanliness at a personal level and then make sure I tell my family to do the same. Since we all live together, we need to act together.” “Earlier, I used to go my neighbours every time I am free for a quick chat, but now I generally stay indoors.”

Effective communication:

- Spread of messages in the camps is not extremely systematised or straightforward, owing to which the risk of misinformation could be high. Therefore, WFP has undertaken targeted sensitization and mobilization of its staff, including retail staff and volunteers who are made well equipped to address queries and concerns.

“Every time I come here now, I have to clean my hands and [am] told to maintain 1 metre distance. Initially I was forgetting but then people here made sure we observe it. And now I have started observing it outside the outlet.”

Safe access to critical food items:

- WFP provides 100 percent of the refugee population with integrated food assistance either through in-kind, three food items, or e-voucher, a variety of items for people to choose from at a time and place most convenient to them. Their dependence on food is huge and food security/nutrition is critical to battling a health crisis such as COVID-19.

“My family of five depend on the ration we get from the outlet here. We were able to come many times before but now I know we have to restrict our travel and contact time with other people; that is why I come once a month. There are porters who help us carry food home.”

Best Practices || COVID-19 Emergency Response

1) WFP steadfast support and engagement with government local departments:

WFP consistently engages government counterparts at Cox’s Bazar and national level to ensure steady implementation of its programme while continuing to provide technical support for capacity strengthening. As noted, the Rohingya refugees have a high level of trust in the humanitarian mechanisms as well as the local authorities, which serves as a critical medium for communication.

2) Adopting a bottom-up approach:

The perceptions and opinions of Rohingyas are well integrated in programme adaptations and serve as key pillars of the COVID-19 response. At a time when humanitarian staff are facing access challenges and reduced footprint in the camps, proactively engaging Rohingya will also help to ensure overall program continuity, while building trust and engagement desperately needed to implement effective Covid-19 control measures.

3) Inclusive and integrated targeting:

WFP has decades of experience in emergency and development work in Bangladesh. During monsoons and cyclone seasons, WFP has provided rapid-response support to the affected population in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh. In the same vein, WFP has adopted inclusive and integrated targeting to assist the worst affected population in the COVID-19 crisis.