BHASAN CHAR RAPID FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT

Bhasan Char- Bangladesh

July 2022

WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Key Highlights

- Overall vulnerability levels in Bhasan Char were found to be concerning as the assessment saw **92 percent** of Rohingya households in Bhasan Char are highly vulnerable and entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance.

- The economic vulnerability level is **15 percent** with assistance and **88 percent** without assistance. Conversely, **61 percent** of the households are spending between or below MEB.

- **Eighteen percent** of households reported poor food consumption and only **35 percent** of households are consuming adequate nutritious food.

- Almost half of the households do not consume iron-rich food, leading to increased iron deficiencies especially among women.

- Women of reproductive age (16-49) in **90 percent** of households do not consume adequate nutritious food, which indicates severe food deficiency.

- Medium and high coping strategies are used by **60 percent** of households, which illustrates the stressed situation to manage daily food needs. Concerningly, **78 percent** of households adopt at least one negative coping strategy to access food, among which **7 percent** of households adapted high coping strategies.

- Thirty percent of Rohingya households are not engaged in any income generation activities.

- LPG is the primary cooking fuel for **99 percent** of households, and **49 percent** use firewood as a secondary option.

- Refugees have asked for e-voucher modality (**88 percent**) to receive food assistance from WFP.

Introduction

In late 2020, the Government of Bangladesh began relocating Rohingya households from the Cox's Bazar camps to the island of Bhasan Char. The Government had decided to relocate a total of 100,000 refugees in phases; as of April 2022, the island's population is nearly 27,000 Rohingya refugees. Humanitarian agencies are working in parallel with the Government as they continue to support the Rohingya population by delivering critical assistance on the island based on humanitarian and protection principles. Since November 2021, WFP and other UN agencies have conducted several field visits to Bhasan Char, supporting UN operational plans with comprehensive mappings of the gaps and needs of the Rohingya refugees, ensuring their basic human rights needs and wellbeing are upheld and provided for on Bhasan Char.

Before starting interventions, a rapid food security assessment was conducted to provide a baseline level of vulnerability for programme teams about the Rohingya refugees in Bhasan Char. The assessment consists of the prevalence of food insecurity, level of economic vulnerability, livelihood coping mechanisms, income opportunities, assistance modalities, household assets, WASH, health, and education services received by refugees at the time of data collection. The information provides an in-depth reflection on how to design food security and livelihood interventions while advocating for the Government and donors.

Demographics

Household Size

- 1-3: 35%
- 4-6: 51%
- 7 or 7+: 14%
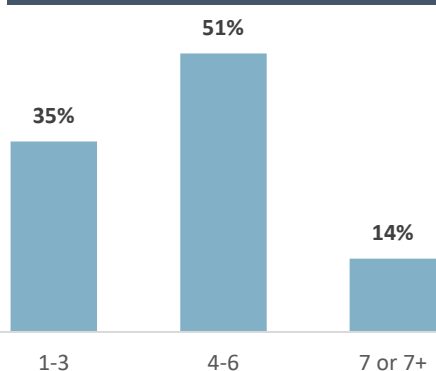
Household Information

Male headed household	73%
Female headed household	27%
Elderly headed household	8%
Has transgender member	1%
Member with disability	19%
Member with chronic illness	24%
Pregnant and lactating women	26%

Gender Proportion in Households

52% | 48%

Education in Households

- 32% school aged child
- 21% attending school
- 11% not attending school
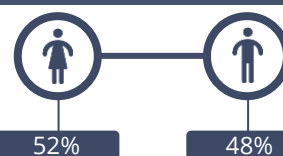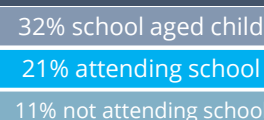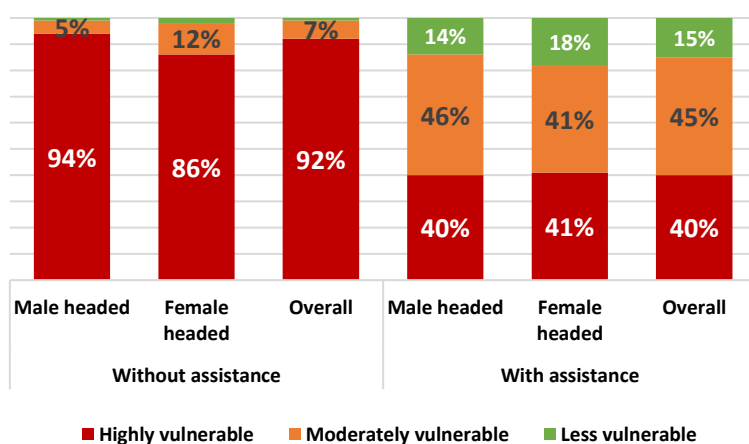
Overall vulnerability

The overall vulnerability is calculated based on economic vulnerability, food and livelihood coping strategies, and food consumption. Nearly 4 out of 10 households in Bhasan Char are highly vulnerable. The assessment reported about 15 percent in Bhasan Char are less vulnerable with the provision of assistance. The leading causes of vulnerability are lack of livelihood opportunities and inadequate assistance.
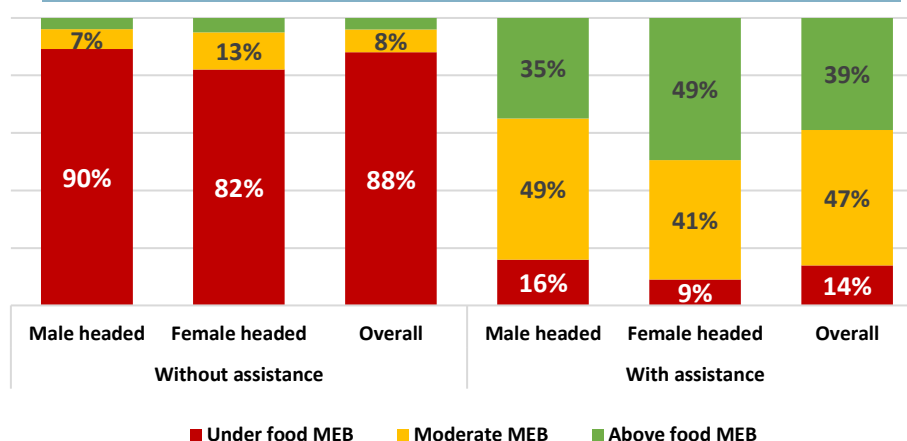
The scenario is overwhelming if the families do not receive any assistance. A stimulated exercise demonstrates that 92 percent of households are highly vulnerable without assistance. Slightly more male-headed households (94 percent) are highly vulnerable compared to their female counterparts (86 percent) without any assistance.

Without assistance

	Highly vulnerable	Moderately vulnerable	Less vulnerable
Male headed	94%	5%	
Female headed	86%	12%	
Overall	92%	7%	

With assistance

	Highly vulnerable	Moderately vulnerable	Less vulnerable
Male headed	40%	46%	14%
Female headed	41%	41%	18%
Overall	40%	45%	15%

Legend: ■ Highly vulnerable ■ Moderately vulnerable ■ Less vulnerable

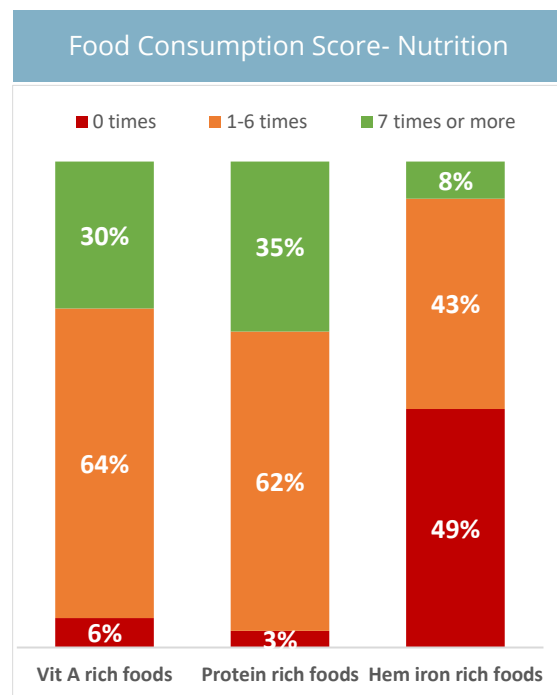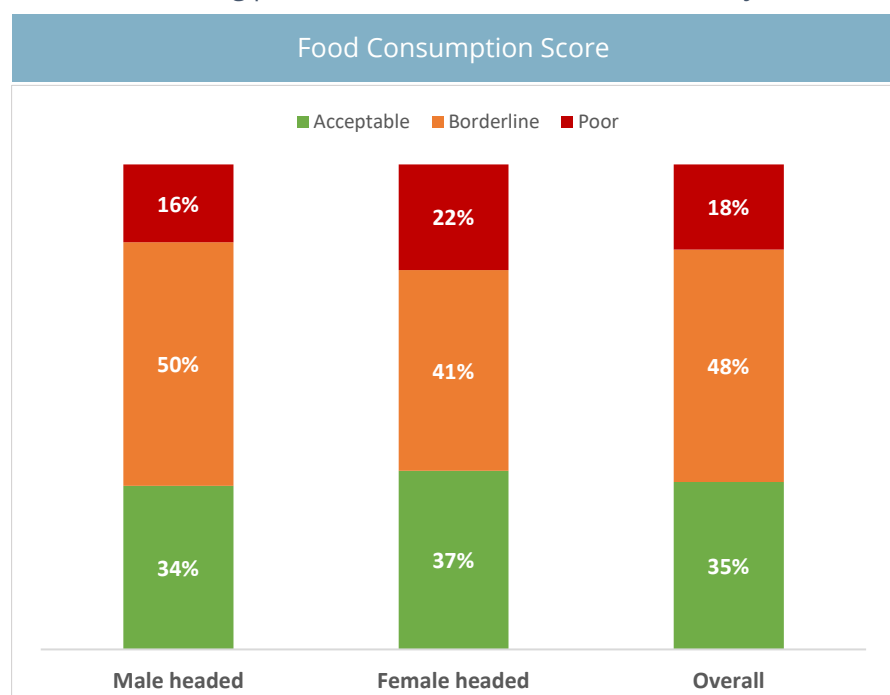# Expenditures and economic vulnerability

This assessment revealed that the Rohingya community in Bhasan Char are highly economically vulnerable due to the limited livelihood opportunities available. In addition to the Bhasan Char community being highly vulnerable without assistance can be further shown by 88 percent of these households live below their food MEB. With assistance, 61 percent of the households in Bhasan Char are spending between or below MEB. The situation was much worse for male-headed households with a slightly higher proportion of households reporting 90 percent under MEB without assistance and 16 percent with assistance.

Levels of Economic Vulnerability

Without assistance

	Under food MEB	Moderate MEB	Above food MEB
Male headed	90%	7%	
Female headed	82%	13%	
Overall	88%	8%	

With assistance

	Under food MEB	Moderate MEB	Above food MEB
Male headed	16%	49%	35%
Female headed	9%	41%	49%
Overall	14%	47%	39%

Legend: ■ Under food MEB ■ Moderate MEB ■ Above food MEB

Food consumption

The household Food Consumption Score (FCS) is associated with the household's food access and is therefore used as a proxy for household food security. Food consumption indicators are designed to reflect the quantity and quality of people's diets. Only 35 percent of households are consuming adequately. On average, nearly half of the households remain on borderline consumption. About 18 percent of the households reported to be in the poor food consumption category and these are usually characterised by not consuming staples and vegetables every day and never or very seldom consuming protein-rich food such as meat and dairy.

Food Consumption Score

■ Acceptable ■ Borderline ■ Poor

	Male headed	Female headed	Overall
Poor	16%	22%	18%
Borderline	50%	41%	48%
Acceptable	34%	37%	35%

Food Consumption Score- Nutrition

■ 0 times ■ 1-6 times ■ 7 times or more

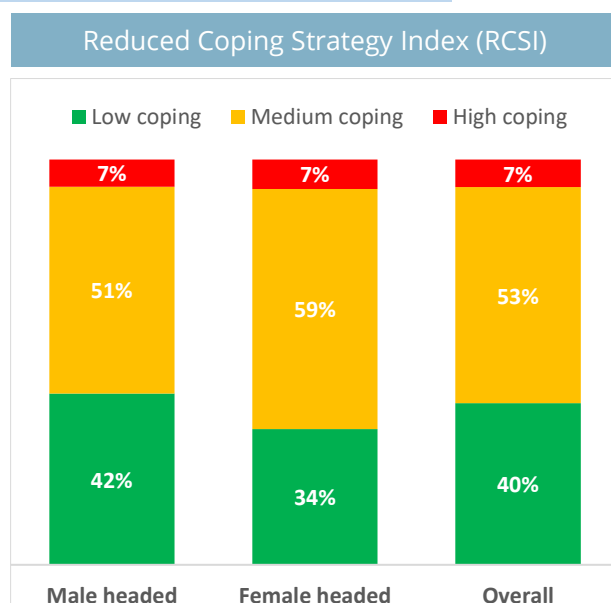|	Vit A rich foods	Protein rich foods	Hem iron rich foods
7 times or more	30%	35%	8%
1-6 times	64%	62%	43%
0 times	6%	3%	49%

In order to assess the household's adequacy of key macro and micronutrient-rich food groups, the assessment looked at the frequencies of consumption of protein-rich, Hem Iron and Vitamin A-rich foods over the 7 days prior to the interview. The consumption partners of nutrient-rich foods in Bhasan char show that almost half of them did not consume iron-rich food weekly. Iron deficiency is one of the main causes of anaemia mainly affecting preschool children and women. Female-headed households were reported to have a slightly higher proportion in the poor food consumption category (22 percent) compared to male-headed households (16 percent).

Overall, the limited consumption frequency of vitamin A and hem iron in Bhasan Char reflects that they do not have enough food to meet their nutrient needs. Only 1 out of 10 women of reproductive age consume adequate nutritious foods. Ninety percent of women of reproductive age do not meet minimum dietary diversity requirements due to food shortages
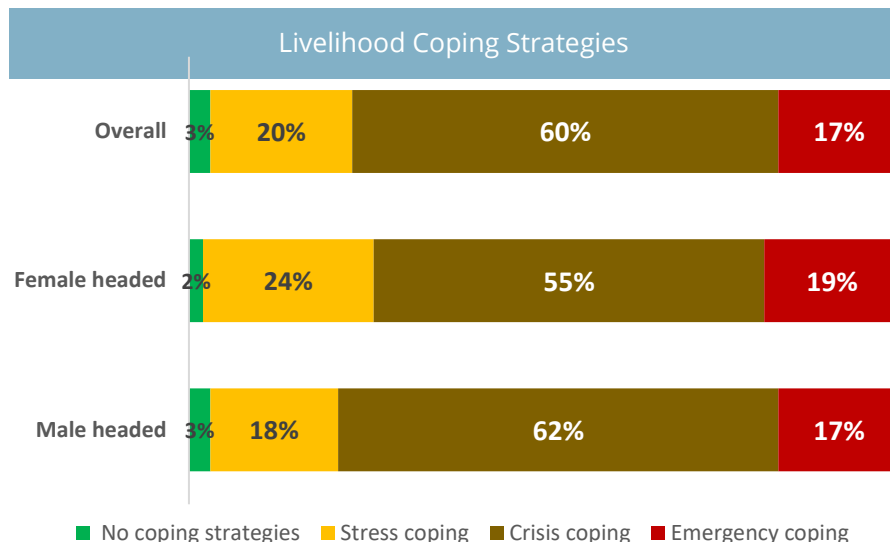
Coping mechanisms

The assessment used the Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI), also called CSI food, to assess the level of stress faced by the households due to a food shortage. It is measured by combining the frequency and severity of the food consumption-based strategies households are engaging in.

Data reveals that 78 percent of Bhasan Char households adopted at least one negative coping strategy to access food, and 7 percent adopted high positive coping strategies. Forty percent of Rohingya households in Bhasan Char adopted low negative coping strategies to access food. The scenario indicates that households in Bhasan Char face severe difficulty accessing. The average RCSI score is 6.5 in Bhasan char which is a bit high in female-headed households (7.2) than male-headed households (6.2). Meanwhile, having less preferred food, depending on support from friends and relatives, and reducing the number of meals are commonly adopted strategies.

Reduced Coping Strategy Index (RCSI)

■ Low coping ■ Medium coping ■ High coping

	Male headed	Female headed	Overall
High coping	7%	7%	7%
Medium coping	51%	59%	53%
Low coping	42%	34%	40%

Currently, 60 percent of the Refugees in Bhasan Char have adopted crisis coping strategies reducing non-food expenditures and selling household goods and food rations. This is more common among male-headed households (62 percent) compared to their female-headed counterparts (55 percent). 17 Percent of households also use emergency coping strategies. Borrowing money, buying food on credit, and spending savings are frequent coping behaviours. Five percent of households admitted that they had to be involved in risky or illegal work (e.g., begging, stealing, etc.) to survive. The overall scenario presents a deterioration in respondents' abilities to deal with future shocks, maintain adequate production capacity, and manage emergency family needs.

Livelihood Coping Strategies

	No coping strategies	Stress coping	Crisis coping	Emergency coping
Overall	3%	20%	60%	17%
Female headed	2%	24%	55%	19%
Male headed	3%	18%	62%	17%

- 🟩 No coping strategies
- 🟨 Stress coping
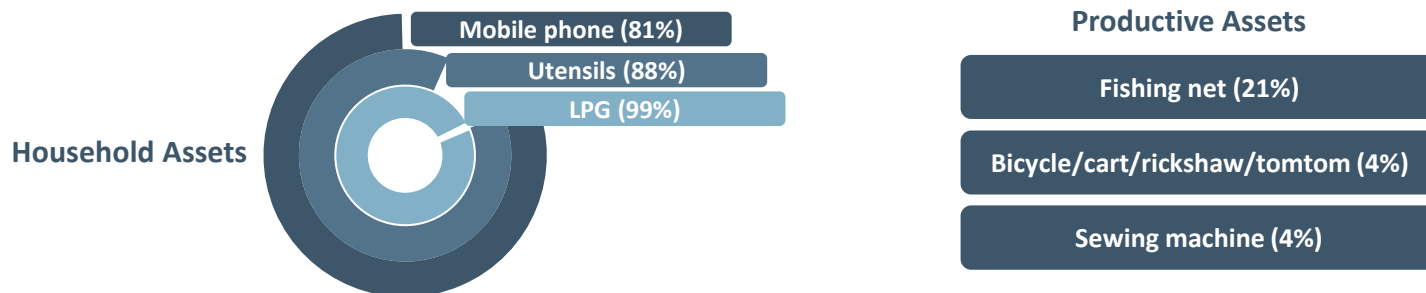- 🟫 Crisis coping
- 🟥 Emergency coping

Livelihoods and income sources

In Bhasan Char, refugees have minimal income sources for their livelihoods. Thirty percent of households are not engaged in income-generating activities, driving them to adopt various negative coping strategies. Casual labour is the primary source of income for 31 percent of households; small-scale crop production and livelihood activities are the primary sources of income for 13 percent of households. Only 4 percent of households are involved with selling food assistance, small trade, cash for work and cash for training as a primary source of income. Selling food assistance and trading non-food assistance like LPF and shelter materials are common among 8 percent of refugees in Bhasan Char. Additionally, 7 percent of households rely exclusively on NGO assistance, charity, and social safety nets as their only income source.

30% households have no income source

Asset ownership

Household Assets

- Mobile phone (81%)
- Utensils (88%)
- LPG (99%)

Productive Assets

- Fishing net (21%)
- Bicycle/cart/rickshaw/tomtom (4%)
- Sewing machine (4%)

Other essential needs

WASH

- 81% use Tube well water
- 84% use Pit latrine with slab
- 28% females face challenges to access toilet

Health

- 68% have at least one sick member in 30 days
- 61% faced difficulties in accessing treatment
- 27% said treatment was not available

Cooking

- 99% use LPG as primary cooking fuel
- 49% use firewood as secondary option

Protection

- 98% facing no protection issues
- 1.5% reported about physical/sexual violence

Methodology

This assessment followed a quantitative survey approach for data collection. The cluster sampling method was followed and all 42 inhabited clusters were covered to select the respondents. 672 households equally divided into all inhabited clusters were surveyed randomly. Sample size was calculated by considering 5 percent precision, 50 percent prevalence of indicators, and 95 percent confidence level with +/- 15 percentage points.

A list of sample households was prepared based on random selection from the latest population database circulated by the CiC office (N.B. this was the only list available at the time of data collection). Data collection was completed from 12-27 March, 2020.

WFP corporate digital data collection platform MODA was used to collect and preserve data and later analysed by using SPSS.
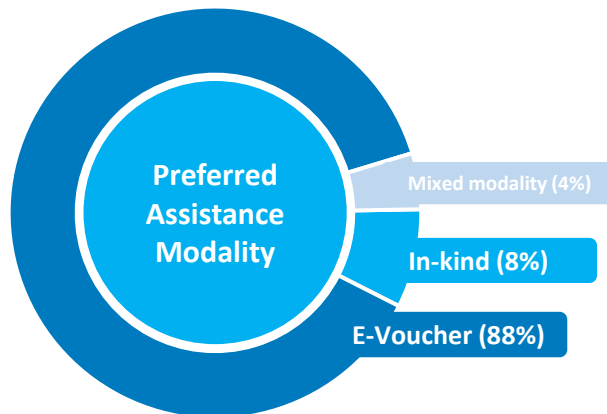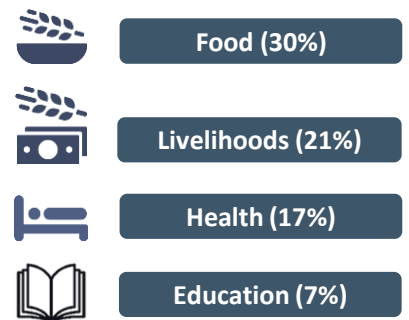
Coverage Map
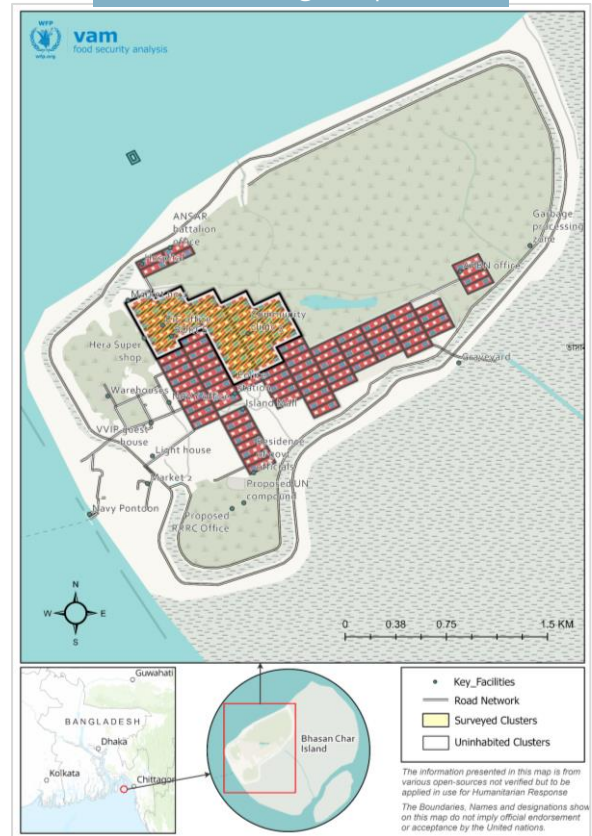
Assistance and priority needs

93% households received assistance in February

Preferred Assistance Modality

Mixed modality (4%)

In-kind (8%)

E-Voucher (88%)

Urgent Priority Needs

- **Food (30%)**
- **Livelihoods (21%)**
- **Health (17%)**
- **Education (7%)**

Recommendations

1. Increase access to fresh foods

2. Support creation of livelihood opportunities including building productive assets

3. Introduce value vouchers to increase beneficiary food selection options

4. Social Behaviour Change and Communication (SBCC) on nutrition to address poor dietary diversity, especially for women in the reproductive age group

For further information

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