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World Food Programme

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WFP M&E

FOOD SECURITY OUTCOME MONITORING SURVEY REPORT

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Highlights

Context: The World Food Programme (WFP) Bangladesh Country Office supports the food security needs of Rohingya refugee households and vulnerable Bangladeshi community households through monthly food assistance using e-vouchers redeemed at retail outlets within the camps, nutrition assistance, self-reliance support, disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities, an integrated package of livelihood assistance and school feeding. WFP assisted over 875,000 Rohingya refugees and 882,018 Bangladeshi community beneficiaries in 2021.

Food Security: The proportion of Rohingya households with acceptable food consumption improved – reached 59 percent – compared to 50 percent in 2020. However, despite this increase, the proportion of households with poor scores remains the same as in 2020. Adequate food consumption is better in the Bangladeshi community (72 percent) and has improved by five percent compared to 2020. Refugee beneficiaries receiving extra assistance through top-up vouchers and engagement in cash for work activities had better acceptable food consumption scores indicating the potential impact of additional assistance on improvements in dietary diversity.

Consumption-Based Coping: A declining trend was observed in beneficiary households using coping strategies. Compared to 2020, the average coping index among refugees reduced from 5.3 to 3.1 and from 6.5 to 3.4 in the Bangladeshi community. Although a decline was observed, the proportion of households adopting at least one consumption-based strategy remains high - more than half of the beneficiaries in the Bangladeshi community (70 percent) and a higher proportion in the refugee community (80 percent) used at least one coping strategy. Relying on less preferred food remains the strategy used most. Beneficiary households in the refugee community that do not receive extra assistance had a higher coping index.

Food Selling: The sale of food assistance decreased from 32 percent in 2020 to 11 percent in 2021. The items mostly sold, exchanged, or shared were grains/rice and oil.

Asset Creation Benefits: Overall, many beneficiaries (97 percent) reported that assets created through WFP programmes are beneficial to their community. Key benefits include protecting from natural shocks, increasing access to basic functionalities, and improving their natural environment.

Accountability and Protection: Overall, many beneficiaries are aware of the selection process and their entitlements. However, beneficiary knowledge of the programme duration is low across most programmes. Although the crisis is protracted, sensitization on this aspect of the programme is required.

Recommendations

1. Findings from the study show that food consumption scores have improved since 2020. However, the level of consumption is still relatively low, especially the consumption of fruits and vegetables. An approach that combines improving beneficiary knowledge and capacity to purchase/obtain diverse foods should be considered by programmes.
2. The findings, in addition, clearly show that the beneficiaries with additional assistance have more stable access to food and cope with less adverse coping strategies. Acknowledging that providing further assistance may not be operationally feasible, the programmes should continue to target and give more assistance to vulnerable groups and identify options for other groups to access the top up assistance.
3. Beneficiaries reported that asset creation activities have greatly improved communities' resilience to natural shocks/hazards and improved access to services. Further, participation in asset creation activities contributed to improved access of vulnerable beneficiaries to more assistance to supplement their food needs. Therefore, these activities should be scaled up further alongside adequate needs assessment and population targeting.
4. Whilst beneficiary knowledge of entitlements and selection criteria was high, their knowledge of programme duration was relatively low. Programmes should improve communication and participation of beneficiaries at design stages to address this aspect.

1. Introduction

1.1. CONTEXT

A massive influx of Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh following an outbreak of violence in Rakhine State, northern Myanmar, in August 2017. An estimated 726,000 refugees crossed the border into Bangladesh, joining a smaller group of Rohingya refugees who arrived in Bangladesh much earlier. More than 900,000 refugees have settled in the Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts of Cox's Bazar.

In 2017, the World Food Programme (WFP) Bangladesh Country Office, under its Country Strategic Plan (Strategic Objective 2), initiated a crisis response to support the food security needs of Rohingya refugee households and vulnerable Bangladeshi community households. WFP provides food assistance using monthly transfers of e-vouchers redeemable at retail outlets within the camps, nutrition assistance, an integrated package of livelihood assistance in the Bangladeshi community, self-reliance support, disaster risk reduction activities, and school feeding. Over 892,000 Rohingya refugees and 822,000 Bangladeshi community beneficiaries were assisted in 2021.

1.2. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The study's main aim was to monitor the food security status of WFP programme beneficiaries in the Rohingya refugee settlements and the Bangladeshi community in Ukhiya and Teknaf. The specific objectives were:

- I. To assess the food security status within Rohingya and Bangladeshi community households receiving assistance from WFP
- II. To evaluate the appropriateness of food assistance for future improvement of programmes
- III. To develop recommendations for programme improvement and adaptation.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

1.3.1. Sampling

The study sampled refugee and Bangladeshi community households benefitting from WFP programmes in 2021. The sample was selected following a proportionate stratified random sampling approach. Each programme implemented was considered a stratum. The sampling frame was drawn from WFP's beneficiary databases for January-June 2021. A total of 782 beneficiary households from 31 camps and 10 Unions in Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas were sampled. The sample size is representative at the programme level with a 95% confidence level.

1.3.2. Data Collection

Fourteen enumerators were recruited and trained by the WFP M&E team and conducted the interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions that limited physical access to field sites, enumerators collected data remotely over the phone using WFP's corporate MoDA platform. Data collection was carried out in July 2021.

A digitized structured questionnaire collected data on essential food security indicators, beneficiary perspectives of food assistance, safety, and social cohesion indicators. The questionnaire included hints and controls to ensure the standardization and accuracy of data collected.

1.3.3. Limitations

The study was conducted remotely due to the restrictions highlighted above. As a result, the questionnaire was shortened, limiting the number of indicators collected. Only households with phone access were interviewed, potentially introducing selection bias as targeting households with phone ownership may have skewed the sample towards the inclusion of households with better socio-economic status.

Table 1: Number of Samples per Programme

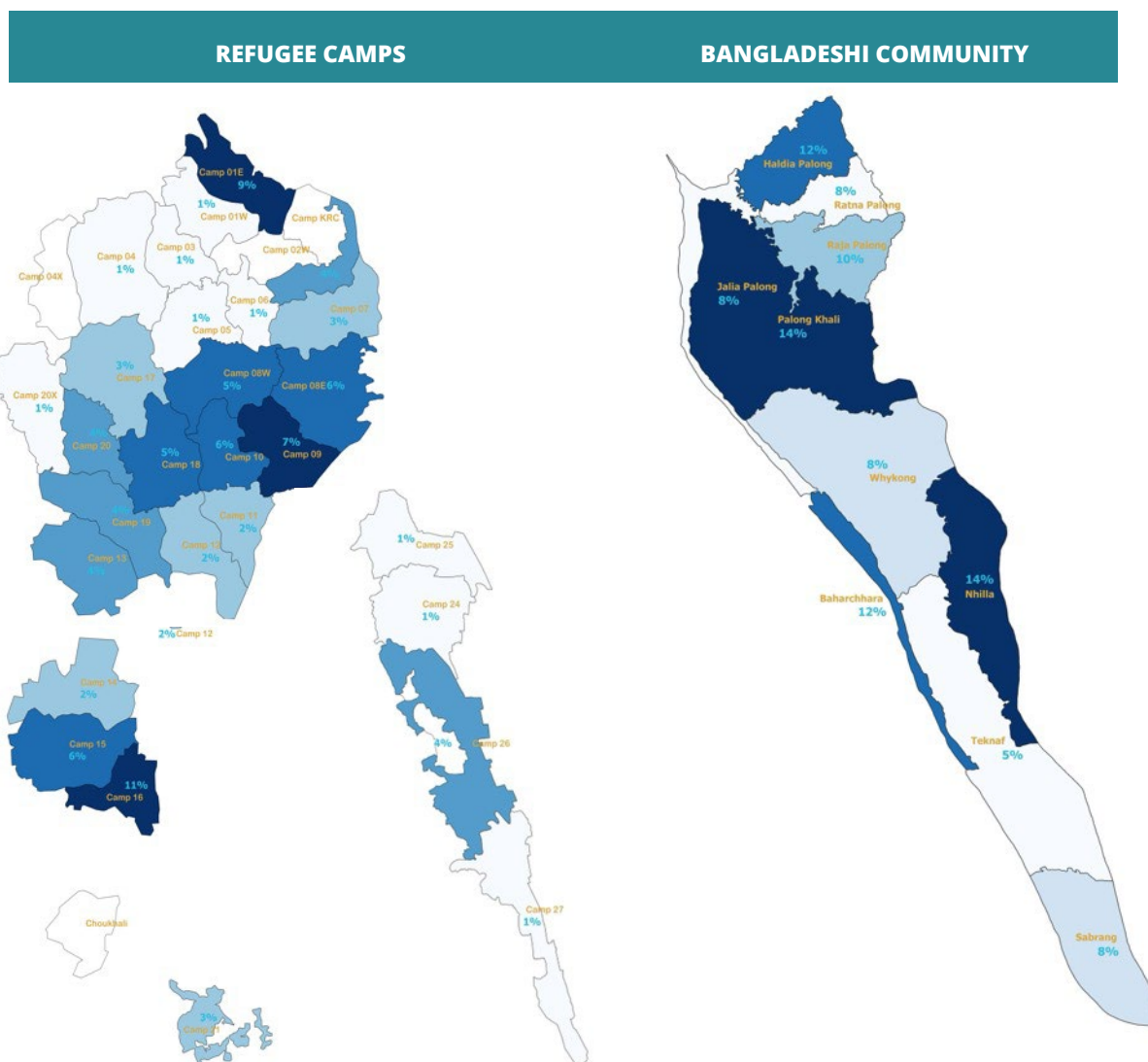
	Programmes	Achieved
REFUGEE	GFA	189
	Fresh Food Corner	97
	Nutrition Refugee	116
	DRR and World Bank CW	144
HOST	Nutrition Host	119
	EFSN	117
	Total	782

2. Results and Discussions

2.1. DEMOGRAPHICS

This survey targeted WFP programme beneficiaries in both refugee and Bangladeshi communities. The data was collected from 31 camps within ten Unions from Ukhiya and Teknaf. Most of the households are male-headed (83 percent). The average household size in the Bangladeshi community is 5.3 and 5.25 among refugee households.

Figure 1: Survey Coverage Map



Amongst the surveyed households, children under five comprise over half (69 percent) of the Bangladeshi communities' household members, with a higher proportion (71 percent) in the refugee community. A quarter of households from the Bangladeshi community and 19 percent of households have at least one person with disabilities. Eleven percent of households from the Bangladeshi community and an almost similar proportion (12 percent) in the refugee community have at least one chronically ill member. The table below summarises household characteristics:

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Surveyed Households

		Bangladeshi	Refugee
Gender of Household Head	Male	80%	85%
	Female	20%	15%
Children and elderly	Household with U5 child	69%	71%
	Households with an elderly person (60+)	19%	18%
Household Composition	1-3 members	14%	18%
	4-6 members	59%	60%
	7-9 members	25%	20%
	10-12 members	1%	2%
	13-15 members	1%	0%
Disability and illness	Household with a person with a disability	25%	19%
	Household with a chronically ill member	11%	12%
Marital status of Household Head	Married Household Head	87%	88%
	Unmarried Household Head	1%	2%
	Divorced/Separated Household Head	1%	1%
	Widowed Household Head	9%	8%

2.2. FOOD SECURITY

2.2.1. Food Consumption

The proportion of households with acceptable food consumption scores in the refugee community increased by nine percent compared to the previous year. Although the borderline score decreased by 10 percent in the camps, the proportion of households with poor scores remains the same as last year. Adequate food consumption is better in the Bangladeshi community and has improved compared to 2020.

The consumption of pulses in the Bangladeshi and Rohingya communities averages 3.0 and 2.7 days, respectively, while meat consumption is 3.9 days among the Bangladeshi community and 3.6 days among the Rohingya. The consumption of vegetables in refugee households is lower than in the Bangladeshi

Figure 2: Food Consumption Score in Bangladeshi & refugee communities (2021)

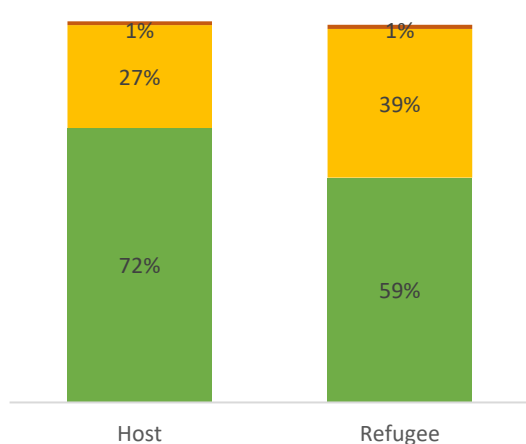
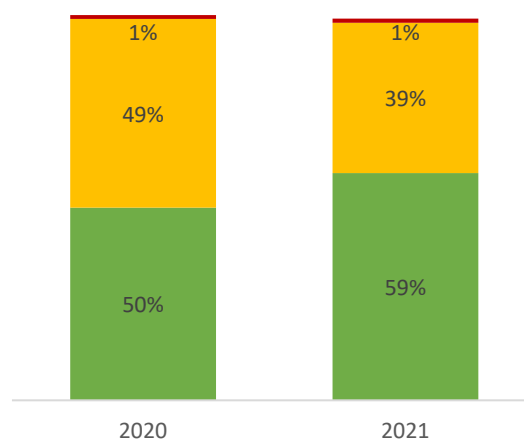


Figure 3: Food Consumption Score in the refugee community (2020 and 2021)



■ Acceptable ■ Borderline ■ Poor

community, with an average of 3.6 days a week. Consumption of milk is low, with an average of a day per week in the Bangladeshi community and less than a day in the refugee community. Among both communities, the consumption of meat and vegetables is slightly higher in female-headed households than in male-headed households. The weekly average meat consumption among male-headed and female-headed households was 3.3 and 3.6, respectively, while vegetable consumption in male-headed and female households was 3.6 and 3.9, respectively. These findings suggest that targeted WFP programmes are evening out previous gaps between male- and female-headed households.

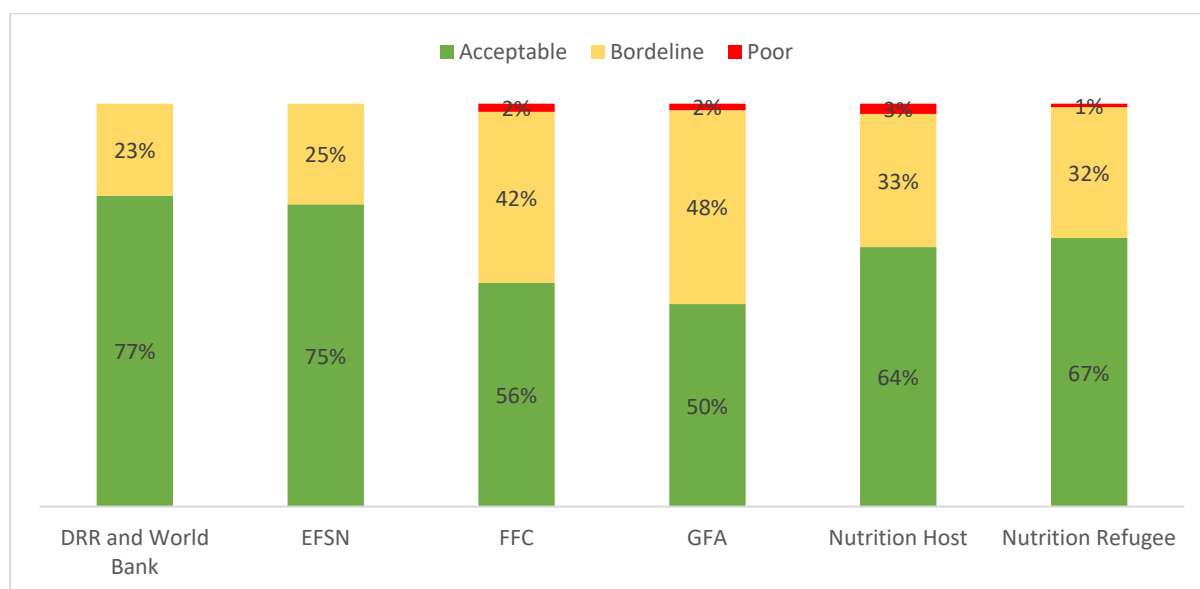
Table 3: Food Consumption by Average Days

Average days of consumption a week	Bangladeshi	Refugee	Female-Headed	Male-Headed
Rice	7	7	7	7
Pulse	3	2.7	2.5	2.4
Milk	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.4
Meat	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.3
Vegetables	4.4	3.6	3.9	3.6
Fruits	1.5	0.9	0.6	0.8

2.2.2. Food Consumption Disaggregated by Programme

Refugee beneficiaries receiving extra assistance through targeted top-up vouchers and engagement in cash for work activities had better acceptable food consumption scores, indicating the potential impact of the provision of additional assistance on improvements in dietary diversity.

Figure 4: Food Consumption Score Disaggregated by Programme



Beneficiaries of the Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition (EFSN) Livelihoods programme implemented in the Bangladeshi community had high acceptable food consumption scores, possibly due to the assistance package combining nutrition sensitization sessions and livelihood support in the form of monthly cash assistance, skills training, and market linkages. Further analysis indicates that beneficiaries receiving a package that included market linkages had better acceptable food consumption scores than those who only received monthly cash assistance and support to start income-generating activities. These findings strengthen the argument for establishing market linkages for beneficiaries.

2.3. COPING STRATEGIES

2.3.1. Consumption-Based Coping

Findings show a declining consumption-based coping trend in refugee and Bangladeshi community beneficiary households. Between 2020 and 2021, the average reduced coping index among refugees reduced from 5.3. to 3.6 and from 6.5 to 3.1 in the Bangladeshi community. Although a decline was observed, households adopting at least one consumption-based strategy remain high. More than half of the beneficiaries in the Bangladeshi community (70%) and a higher proportion in the refugee community (80 percent) used at least one coping strategy the week before the survey. Relying on less preferred food remains the strategy used most as the previous year. Notably, beneficiary households in the refugee community that do not receive extra assistance had a higher average coping index.¹

Figure 5: Reduced Coping Strategy Index by Programme

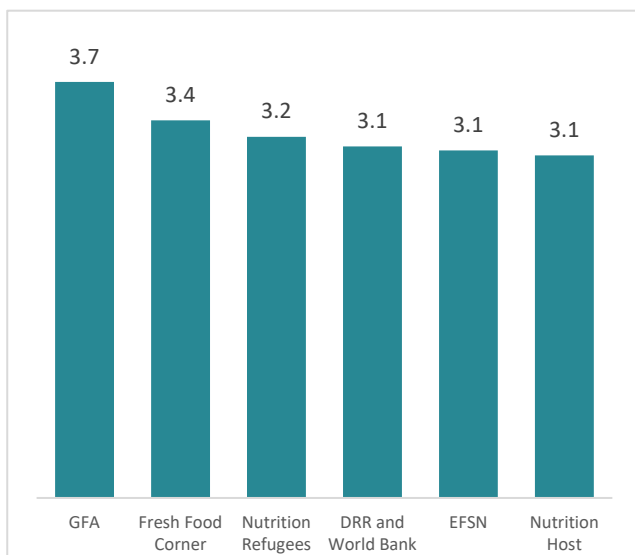
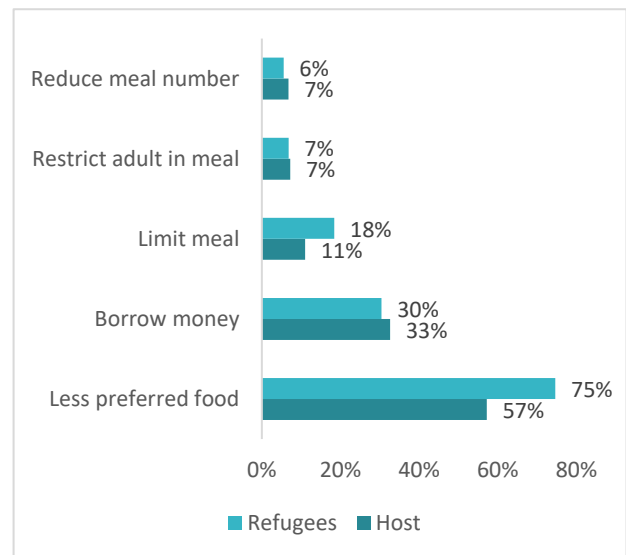


Figure 6: Coping Strategies Adopted by Community

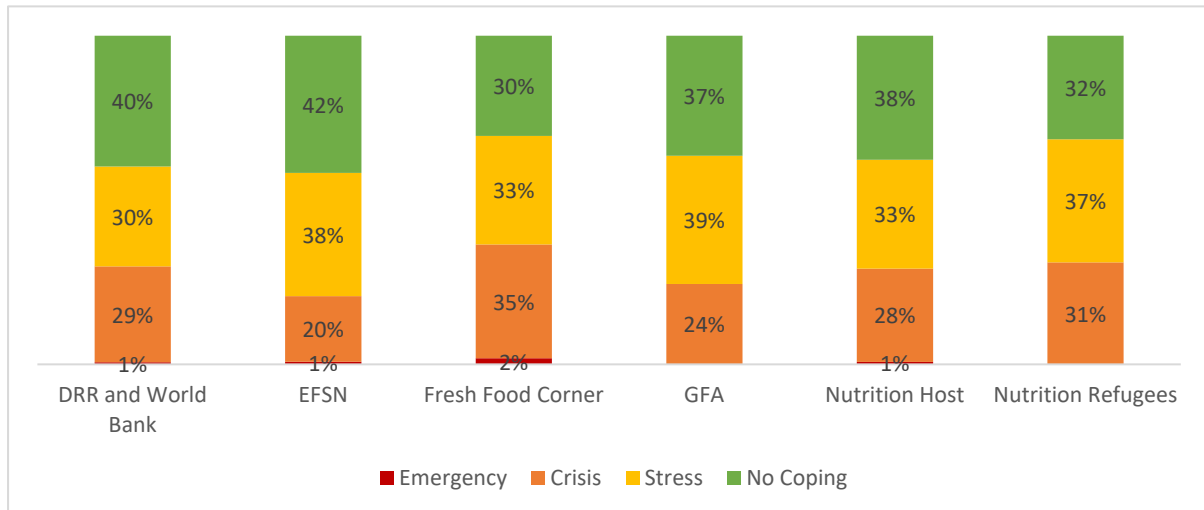


¹ Households who only received General Food Assistance (GFA) had a score of 3.7. Households who received GFA and Fresh Food Corner assistance had a score of 3.4; while households who received GFA and DRR had a score of 3.1.

2.3.2. Livelihood Based Coping

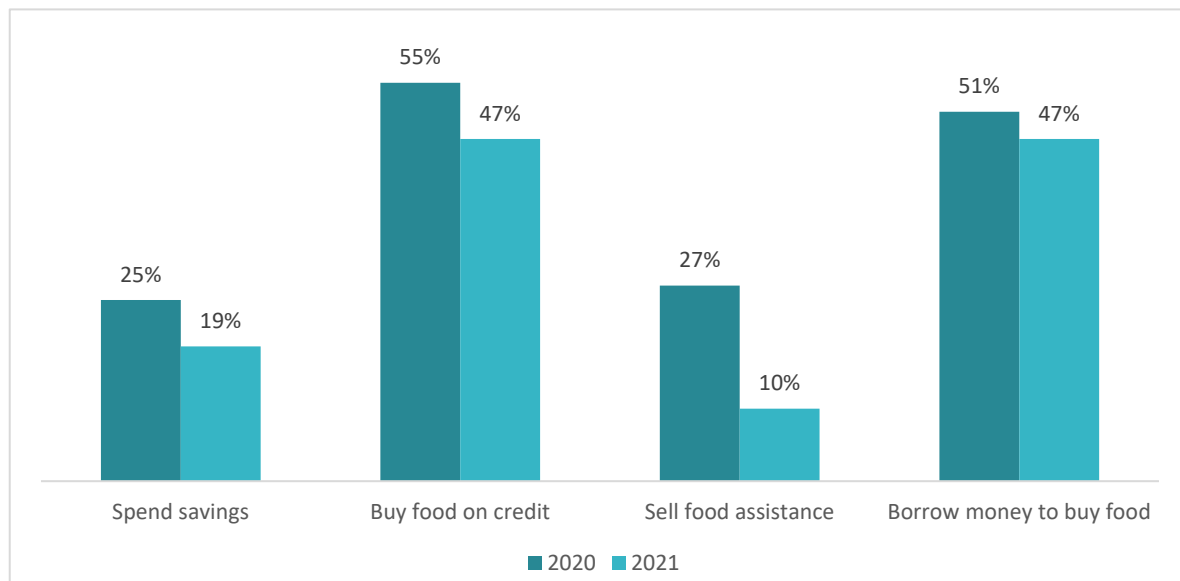
More than half of Rohingya beneficiaries (65 percent) and slightly fewer beneficiaries in the Bangladeshi community (61 percent) used at least one coping mechanism. Overall, there was a decline in the proportion of households that adopted coping strategies. The strategies used most were borrowing money to buy food and buying food on credit. Compared to 2020, there was an eight percent decrease in spending savings and a four percent decrease in borrowing money, indicating beneficiaries are incurring less debt to meet food needs or dipping into their savings less to meet their food needs. Continuous food ration support and other food security and livelihood interventions have contributed to stabilizing beneficiaries' ability to cope.

Figure 7: Livelihood Coping Strategy Adoption By Programme



Households with disabled and chronically ill members were more likely to adopt a coping strategy indicating higher vulnerability.

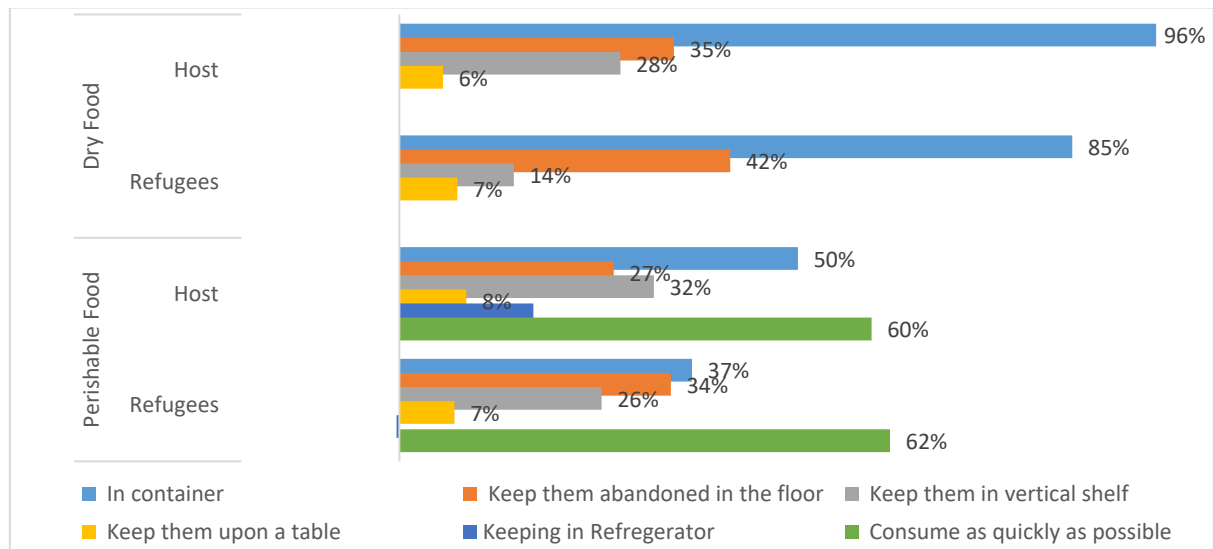
Figure 8: Livelihood Coping Strategies Trend (refugee community)



2.4. FOOD STORAGE

A container is standard for storing dry and perishable food for both Bangladeshi and refugee households. A relatively high proportion of refugees (42 percent) and Bangladeshi community members (35 percent) use the floor to store food. Both communities' access to refrigeration is low, potentially impacting their ability to keep perishable and fresh foods for long and thereby affecting consumption patterns of fresh foods.

Figure 9: Food Storage Methods in Refugee and Bangladeshi Community



2.5. FOOD SELLING

The sale of food assistance decreased from 32 percent in 2020 to 11 percent in 2021. The items mostly sold, exchanged, or shared were grains/rice and oil. Male-headed households were more likely to sell, exchange or share foods than those headed by females. The household size was not associated with the sale of assistance (p-value: 0.205). The assistance was sold mainly to neighbours (40 percent), followed by camp-based markets (33 percent) and to middlemen (27 percent).

Figure 10: Items Sold, Exchanged and Shared

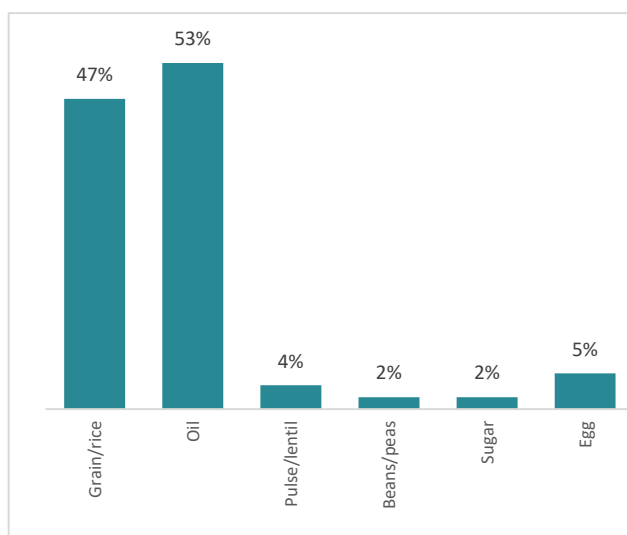
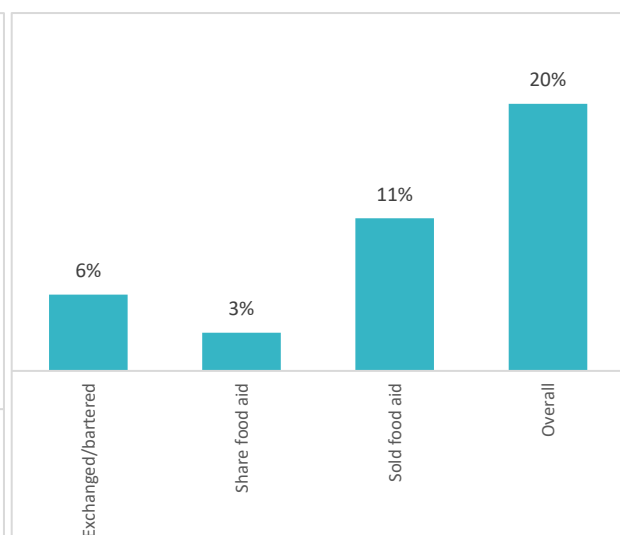


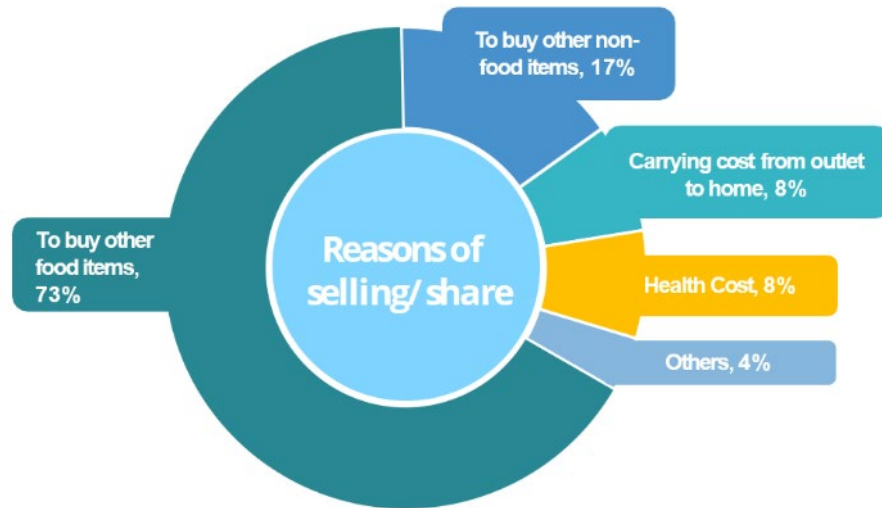
Figure 11: Percentage of Households Selling, Exchanging and Sharing Foods



2.5.1. Reasons for food selling

Similar to 2020, the purchase of other food items - primarily fresh food, followed by non-food items, transport of items to homes and health care – are the most prevalent reasons.

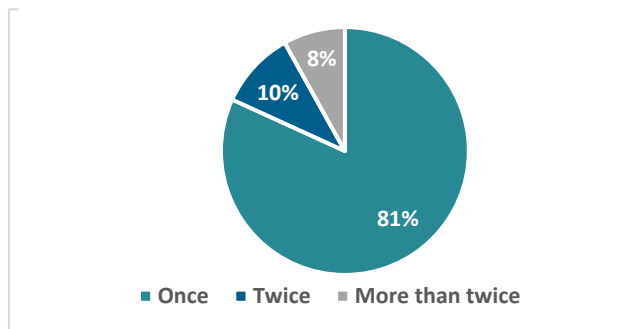
Figure 12: Reasons of Food Sell/Share in Refugee Community



2.6. BENEFICIARY EXPERIENCE

When purchasing food, beneficiaries reported a positive experience at the WFP outlets - more than 99 percent did not face any difficulties in the e-voucher outlets. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, WFP introduced new guidelines whereby beneficiaries visit outlets once a month. The majority of beneficiaries (81 percent) visit the outlet once. However, a small proportion (18percent) reported visiting more than once due to the unavailability of certain food items on their first visit (such as live fish and poultry).

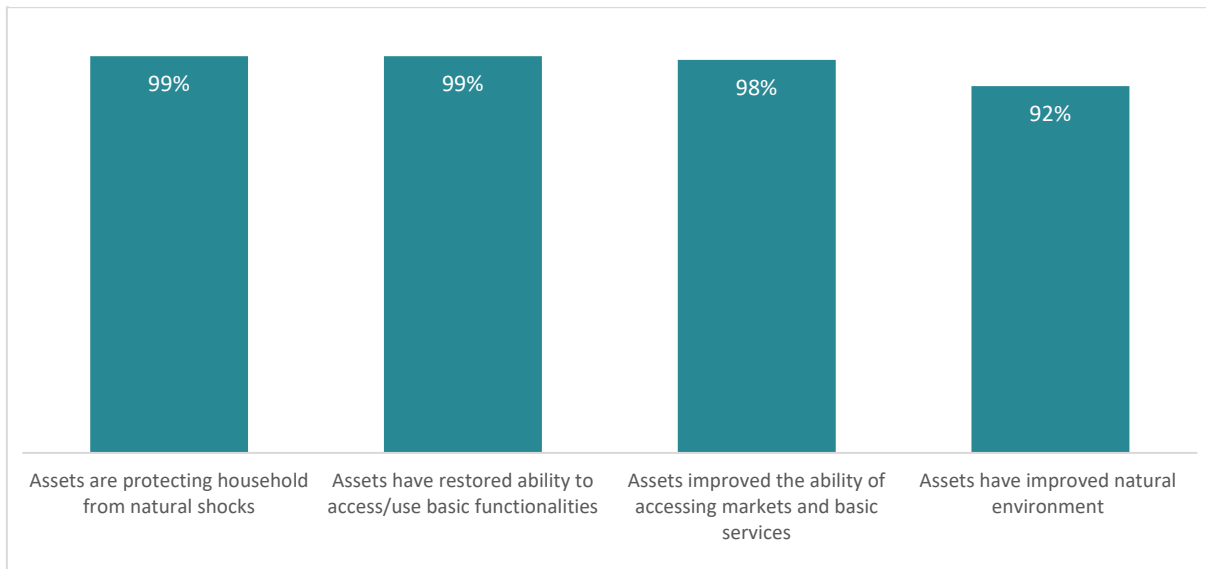
Figure 13: Frequency of Visiting E-Voucher Outlet



2.7. Benefits From Food for Asset Activities

Many beneficiaries (97 percent) found the assets created through WFP programmes beneficial to their community. The beneficiaries said the assets help protect them from natural shocks, increase access to basic functionalities and improve their natural environment.

Figure 14: Reported Benefits of Asset Creation Activities

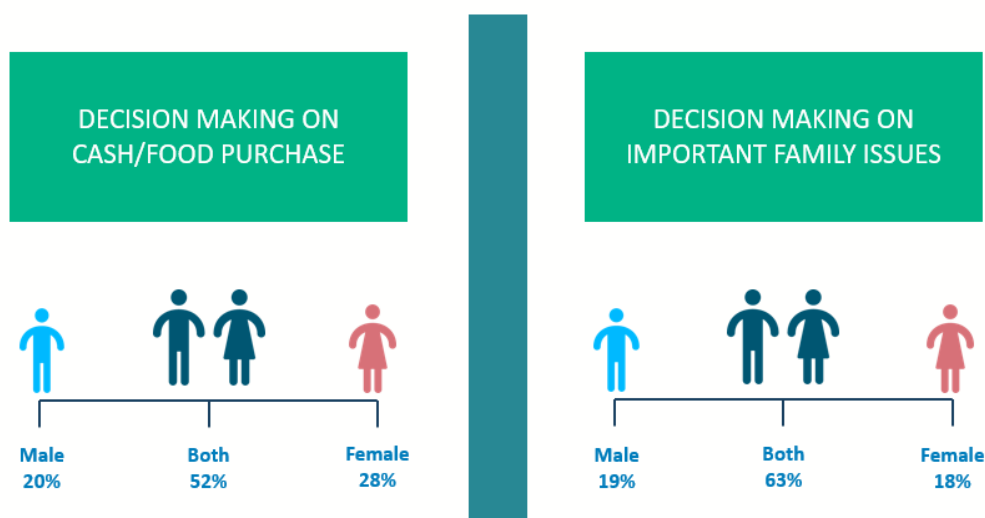


2.8. GENDER AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE

2.8.1. Household Decision Making

In more than half of the households, male and female members make joint food and cash utilization decisions. Regarding decision-making on important family issues, such as what asset to purchase, a higher proportion of households (64 percent) reported shared decision-making. These findings indicate that women generally have some control of household resources and decision-making, and, are usually the ones in charge of what the family eats in particular.

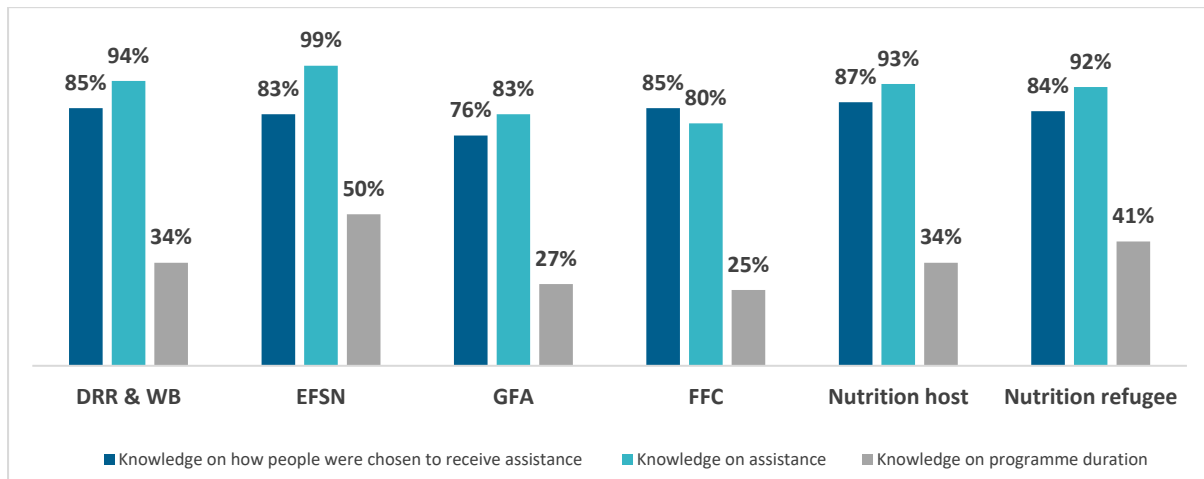
Figure 15: Decision Making in Beneficiary Households



2.8.2. Knowledge of Assistance, Beneficiary Selection and Programme Duration

For this survey, beneficiaries' knowledge of different WFP programmes was assessed. Three knowledge domains were considered in the study: knowledge of beneficiary selection, knowledge of entitlements and programme duration. Overall, many beneficiaries are aware of the selection process and their entitlements. However, knowledge of the programme duration is low across most of the programmes. Although the crisis is protracted, sensitization on this aspect of the programme is required.

Figure 16: Beneficiaries' Knowledge by Programme



2.8.3. Safety

Beneficiaries were asked if they encountered any safety or security issues while travelling to and returning from the WFP site. All beneficiaries reported they feel safe while at and going to WFP sites. Beneficiaries raised no significant safety issues.

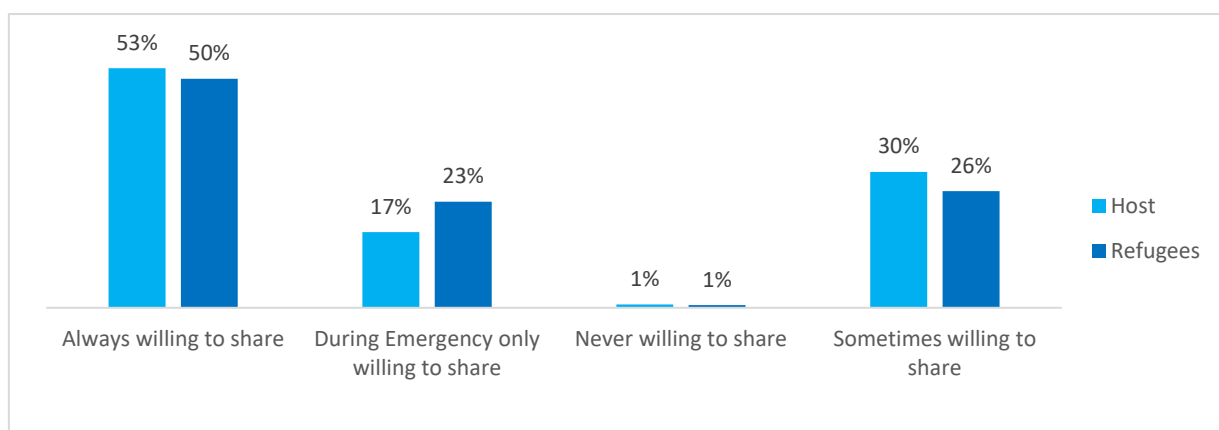
2.9. SOCIAL COHESION AND CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

This part of the assessment aimed at measuring the contribution of WFP activities to social cohesion between and among the Bangladeshi and refugee communities. This assessment assessed four indicators to measure beneficiary social interaction and participation within and outside their communities.

2.9.1. Attitude and Perceptions

Willingness to share financial and in-kind resources was used as a proxy measure to determine the level of belongingness in one's community. About half of the Bangladeshi and refugee households said they are

Figure 17: Willingness to Share Resources with Immediate Neighbors

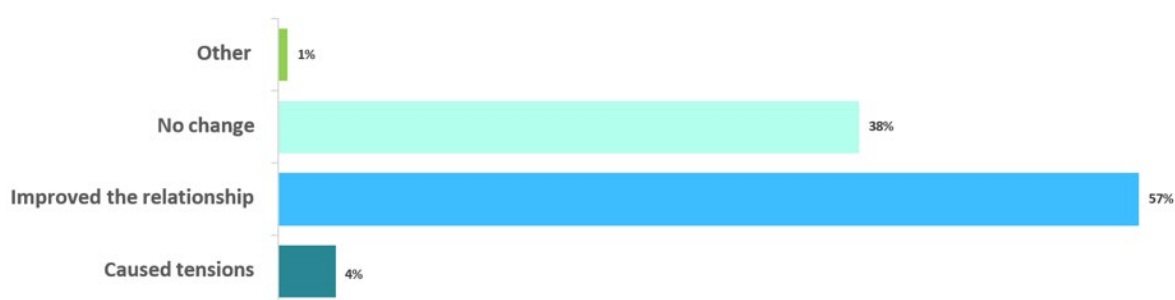


always willing to share resources with neighbours in the same community. However, a higher proportion of households in the Bangladeshi community (36 percent) than in the refugee community (4 percent) expressed unwillingness to share resources outside their community.

2.9.2. Impact of assistance in reducing inter-community conflict

Beneficiaries were asked if they think assistance has changed inter-community relationships between Bangladeshis and the Rohingya. Slightly over half (57 percent) said assistance had improved relationships, and a small proportion (4 percent) thought it had caused tensions.

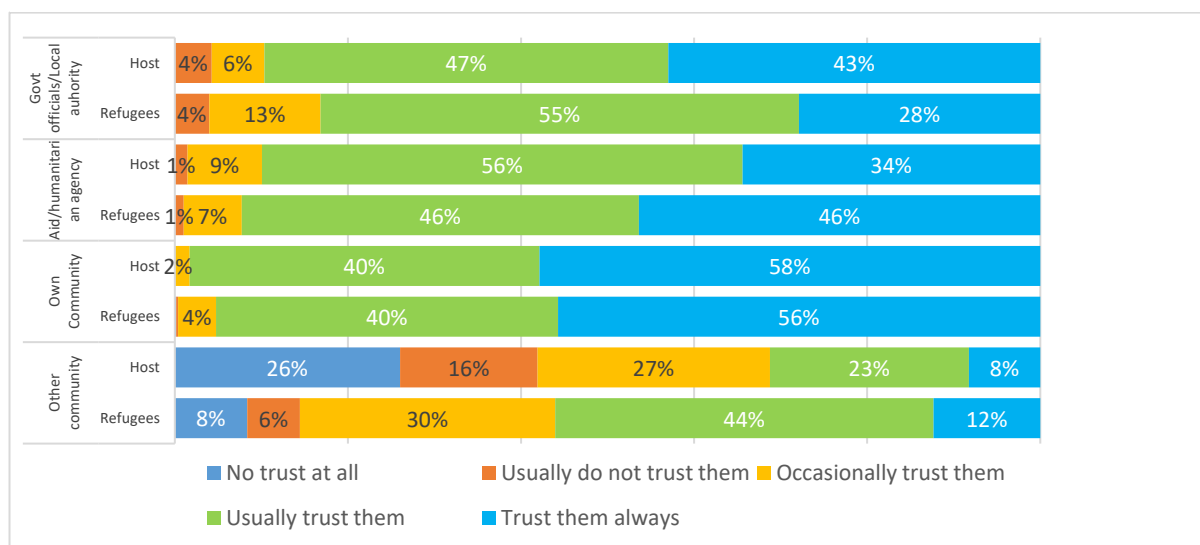
Figure 18: Whether WFP's Intervention Changed Inter-community Relationships Between Bangladeshi and Rohingya Communities



2.9.3. Beneficiary Perceptions of Trust

Trust is a critical element of social cohesion at the household and community levels. This assessment examined the beneficiary perception of trust within and outside their community towards aid agencies, government and local authorities. Unsurprisingly, trust levels are higher within communities than outside one's community. Refugees reported a higher level of trust in the other community and aid agencies than in the Bangladeshi community. Trust in local authorities/government entities was relatively high in both refugee and Bangladeshi communities.

Figure 19: Trust Level in Own and Outside Community



3. Recommendations

Findings from the study show that food consumption scores have improved since 2020. However, the level of consumption is still low, especially the consumption of fruits and vegetables. An approach that combines improving beneficiary knowledge and capacity to purchase/obtain diverse foods should be considered by programmes.

The findings clearly show that beneficiaries with additional assistance have more stable access to food and cope with less adverse coping strategies. Acknowledging that providing further assistance may not be operationally feasible, the programmes should continue to target and give more assistance to vulnerable groups and identify options for other groups to access the top up assistance.

Male-headed households were found to be more prone to food selling. Sensitization efforts on food selling should consider this when designing information approaches.

Beneficiaries reported that asset creation activities have greatly improved communities' resilience to natural shocks/hazards and improved access to services. Further, participation in asset creation activities contributed to improved access of vulnerable beneficiaries to more assistance to supplement their food needs. Therefore, these activities should be scaled up further alongside adequate needs assessment and population targeting.

Whilst beneficiary knowledge of entitlements and selection criteria was high, their knowledge of programme duration was relatively low. Programmes should improve communication and participation of beneficiaries at design stages to address this aspect.

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