HOW EFFECTIVE IS COMMUNICATION IN THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE RESPONSE?

An evaluation of the common service for community engagement and accountability

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the UK Government’s official policies.

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As of September 2018, the Inter Sector Coordination Group estimates that 725,000 people have arrived in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh from Myanmar’s Rakhine state since August 2017. The majority of these arrived within the first three months.

BBC Media Action, Internews and Translators without Borders have been working to improve access to information for Rohingya communities by supporting humanitarian and media agencies in their communication in the camps. The ‘Common Service for Community Engagement and Accountability’ (common service) has involved a range of activities, from creating and sharing audio visual content in the Rohingya language, to training interpreters, tracking rumours circulating in the camps, supporting agencies to set up feedback mechanisms, and ensure community needs and concerns are collated and brought to the attention of responding agencies.

As the first phase of the project, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), comes to an end, this report shares findings from the project evaluation.

A survey, conducted in July 2018, interviewed 750 people from the Rohingya community and 750 people from the host community (local Bangladeshi citizens) about how they access information, what they think of the information and how they communicate with aid providers. The survey tracked how perceived provision of information has changed since an initial information needs assessment, carried out by Internews, in October 2017. Key informant interviews were also carried out with agency practitioners to understand how they are using the tools and services created as part of the common service.

Executive Summary

“...the common service..." helps us to understand what is happening at the community level, especially around complaints, feedback, queries and even about rumour tracking. It’s not only focusing on a specific camp, rather it provides a holistic view of what is happening to the entire population. People are therefore able to change, improve and scale up their interventions.”

International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) practitioner

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The survey shows that people feel substantially more informed in July 2018 than they did in October 2017. The Internews study in October found that only 23% of Rohingya men and women felt they had enough information to make good decisions for themselves and their family. This recent study shows that 84% feel they have enough information to make good decisions for themselves and their families and three quarters (75%) of the Rohingya community said it had become easier to get information over the last six months. This is similar to other data collected – a recent Translators without Borders study found that 68% of Rohingya refugees feel they have enough information to make decisions.

During fieldwork, almost a third (30%) of Rohingya survey respondents asked the data collectors questions such as, did they know where to collect relief, or did they know anything about the Government’s plans for repatriation? This suggests that while the Rohingya community feel better informed than when they first arrived, they still have many questions, particularly around their future – only 41% of respondents said they felt informed about their options for the future.

The survey showed that the current key information needs of the Rohingya and host community are around their main concerns – where to find food. The Rohingya are also worried about sourcing cooking fuel, while the host community is seeking information around financial support as a result of perceived declining employment opportunities.

Exploring further their specific information needs, it was clear that the Rohingya community feel they have enough information on health, safety and security, but feel less confident about keeping their family safe in a cyclone.

Mahjis (Rohingya community leaders) are the main source of information for Rohingya people (mentioned by 87% of participants) and are now the most trusted source of information (they were only ranked 7th in the October 2017 information needs assessment). This increase in trust may be reflective of how agencies and camp coordinators are more systematically using mahjis to share information with people in their camp block. Mahjis are the main channel through which Rohingya communities say they communicate with aid providers (mentioned by 38% of respondents).

A higher proportion of Rohingya people said they could talk to aid providers than at baseline, but 65% of Rohingya women and 49% of Rohingya men still said they couldn’t. This may be because people associate this question with foreign aid workers who don’t speak their language. When asked if aid providers spoke their language, 59% of Rohingya refugees said that some of them did, indicating they were talking about local staff. Almost a third (31%) said yes, aid providers did speak their language, 9% said no, and 1% said they didn’t know.

Rohingya people are giving feedback and are satisfied with how it is being handled. A quarter said they had given feedback or made a complaint, and 82% of these people said they were satisfied with what happened next. Face-to-face methods are the preferred method for

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4 Translators without Borders (September 2018) Language Needs Assessment, Cox’s Bazar
feedback rather than mobile phones or complaints boxes: 80% said they had given feedback through talking to a mahji, 26% had spoken to an NGO staff member and 19% had visited an information hub. The biggest reported barrier to giving feedback was not knowing where to go, and this was particularly the case for women. These findings are similar to those found in the Ground Truth Solutions survey in July 2018, which shows that 67% of Rohingya refugees know how to make suggestions or complaints.

Information hubs are being visited, and people who have been keep going back and would recommend them to others. One fifth of Rohingya people had visited an information hub, and the majority had visited more than once with 42% reporting they had visited more than four times. Some 81% said ‘yes’ when asked if any of the staff spoke Rohingya language.

The audio visual content produced by the project is being used. In the survey, a quarter of Rohingya respondents had seen video content or animations designed to help people in the camps. The majority accessed this content on someone else’s mobile phone. In the key informant interviews practitioners reported that community health workers were downloading content on their mobile phones and using it to engage Rohingya community members and share important information with them.

It is difficult to determine how widely other tools and services produced as part of the common service have been used and disseminated within the response. This study found that at least 33 agencies, seven working groups and four sectors have used the services. Many of these services were bespoke, as they were requested by the organisations, demonstrating the reactive support the project was able to offer.

The key informant interviews with practitioners working within the humanitarian response indicate that the Shongjog website is the most popular tool, as a one-stop shop where ready-made content can be shared and used by different agencies. Participants reported that this has greatly increased efficiency, particularly when speed has been of the essence, such as being able to download and rapidly share information with the Rohingya community about diphtheria and the vaccination campaign. The fact that Shongjog has over 4000 unique users to date supports this.

Overall there is evidence to suggest that the information needs of the Rohingya community are being better met and the feedback mechanisms are appreciated. This study also finds evidence to suggest that humanitarian and media agencies are using the tools and services produced as part of the common service to help them communicate with the Rohingya and host community. Platforms that enable content sharing, such as the Shongjog website, are especially helpful.

This study was not able to solicit enough response from practitioners to draw strong evidence on how they are using the tools produced by the common service, and adapting their services based on advice. This will be explored in more detail in the next phase of the project.

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Moving forward, it will be important to understand the role of the community influencers – *mahjis*, *imans*, and *murobbis* (community elders). Given the high proportion of community members who are giving feedback by speaking to *mahjis*, it would be interesting to explore how this channel could be used more systematically to understand communities’ needs and concerns going forward. It is important that the project does not lose momentum, and continues to ensure that there is relevant communication in the Rohingya language across all sectors.
The common service for community engagement and accountability for the Rohingya response

BBC Media Action, Internews and Translators without Borders have been implementing the start-up phase of the common service for Community Engagement and Accountability, with funding from DFID and IOM. This common service aims to ensure that community engagement/feedback, the provision of information, and participation are at the heart of the humanitarian response, and are effectively implemented and coordinated. As a common service, this project is intended to provide value to the overall Rohingya response by supporting responding agencies with how they communicate and engage with Rohingya people and host communities.

Project objectives
The objectives of the project are summarised as follows:

• **Coordinated, timely and responsive two-way community engagement** with affected people in their own language on critical life-saving and life-enhancing actions that individuals, families and communities can take.
• **Systematic accountability through a common mechanism** for collecting and analysing feedback directly from communities and collated by different actors in order to inform decision-making processes at the sector and country levels.

Project activities
The common service has provided a range of specialist, technical support services to sectors and agencies within the response, as well as the Communicating with Communities Working Group (CwC) and other working groups and task forces. It has also started to operate a collective feedback analysis service (‘What Matters?’); produced a significant number of common communication tools; provided training in communicating with communities and language-related areas to humanitarian and media agencies; and initiated a regular narrowcast and rumour-tracking bulletin.

The activities that form the common service are outlined in the diagram on page 9.
Rapid information needs for new arrivals

Ongoing content & language provisions

Strengthening information centers

Digital service

Interpreter connect

Collective feedback analysis

Information ecosystem research/community mapping

Feedback to humanitarian partners

Evaluation of response

Humanitarian communication

Evaluation of accountability

Two-way community communication

Rumor tracking & fact-checking

Narrowcast service
Research study

As the start-up phase of this project comes to an end, this study aims to evaluate how successful the common service has been in achieving its objectives so far. It also aims to capture learning around what has and hasn’t worked, to inform this work going forward, and to provide a picture of how Rohingya people and host communities are accessing information and communicating with aid providers.

Specific objectives of this research study were:
1) To determine to what extent communities are accessing the information that the common service is providing.
2) To determine whether communities are aware of and feel they are able to use the feedback mechanisms in place that are looped into the common service, to raise issues and concerns, which are listened to and responded to effectively.
3) To explore to what extent responding agencies feel that they are better able to communicate and engage with communities as a direct result of common service resources, support, or activities.
4) To understand how feedback generated through the common service is being used by humanitarian agencies, and whether there are any barriers to using it.

Research questions
The research questions this study aimed to answer are as follows:

At community level
- Do community members feel they have access to enough information to make decisions for themselves and their families? Why? / Why not?
- Are community members aware of available feedback mechanisms, are they using them, and do they consider them to be effective?
- Are feedback mechanisms in a language and format that are easily accessible by community members?

At responding agency level
- How widely are the tools and services produced by the common service being used among responding agencies, and why?
- Do responding agencies feel they are better able to communicate with communities as a result of using these tools and services? Why? / Why not?
- Has the feedback generated by the common service led to adaptations in agencies’ response activities? How? / Why not?
- What evidence is there that the common service is contributing to issues raised by communities being addressed by the humanitarian response?
- What are the perceptions of the humanitarians on the effectiveness of the common service in increasing efficiency for the humanitarian system?

Research methodology
The evaluation study employed a mixed research methodology. It made use of data already collected throughout the project and collected new data. The following methods were used to collect data at each level.
Community level quantitative survey
A quantitative survey was undertaken with Rohingya people and the host community with a total sample size of 1500 (750 participants from the Rohingya community; 750 participants from the host community). A research agency was commissioned to carry out the survey, with oversight from the BBC Media Action research and learning team.

The survey tool was developed based on the Information Needs Assessment carried out in Cox’s Bazar by Internews in October 2017. Relevant figures from the Internews study were used as a proxy baseline for this survey, to understand how people’s access to information and ability to communicate with aid providers has changed. Community feedback analysed for the ‘What Matters?’ newsletters has been used to triangulate findings where possible.

Qualitative key informant interviews with humanitarian and media practitioners
Key informant interviews were carried out with nine representatives from agencies and sectors responding to the crisis to understand more about their experiences of the common service in practice. The interviews were carried out by BBC Media Action research staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Name of the organisations</th>
<th>No. of staff interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector level</td>
<td>IOM, UNICEF</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CwC working group representatives</td>
<td>Bangladesh Betar, WHO, UNHCR</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field level staff</td>
<td>Medical Teams International, Pulse Bangladesh, Deutsche Welle Akademie, UNHCR</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online Survey
In addition to the above methodologies, an online survey was designed to measure take up among practitioners of the different services and tools available through the common service, and how useful these services were perceived to be. This received a very low response rate; and therefore has not been used. Numbers of how many people have taken up services, taken from project monitoring and web analytics have been used instead (see page 26).

Research Challenges
The quantitative community survey was delayed owing to the monsoon season and other logistical challenges such as gaining access to the camps and ensuring randomisation in selection. There were also some learnings around question comprehension and translation, which will be helpful in future research. For example, the word ‘information’ does not exist in the Rohingya language and was translated as ‘news’.

To triangulate the findings of the quantitative survey, qualitative in-depth interviews were planned to be carried out with members of the Rohingya and host community, to understand more about their experiences engaging with feedback mechanisms and communicating with the responders. Owing to delays in quantitative data collection, respondents for in-depth interviews were not identified in time, and these interviews could not be carried out.
Research findings

Log frame indicators
The table below outlines the log frame indicators to be reported on at the end of the project, and which were explored through this research study. More detail on the achieved figures included will be provided in the narrative below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome indicator 1.1:</strong> percentage of people who report that they have enough information, in a language they understand, to make decisions for themselves and their family</td>
<td>23%⁶</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>84%⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome indicator 1.2:</strong> percentage of people who consider feedback mechanisms accessible, understandable and effective</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26% of Rohingya community have given feedback 82% of those people were satisfied with what happened next 77% said they would give feedback again When asked what the barriers to giving feedback were, 42% of Rohingya community said there were no barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome indicator 1.3:</strong> number of agencies that report that feedback and accountability mechanisms have led to adaptations in response activities</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>See footnote⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Output indicator 2.2:</strong> number of sectors and agencies that report making use of CwC common service tools or advice</td>
<td>20 (Feb 2018)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33 agencies 7 working groups 4 sectors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following section of the report discusses the findings from the community level quantitative survey.⁹

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⁶ Baseline figure from Internews Information Needs Assessment, October 2017. [https://www.internews.org/resource/information-needs-assessment-coxs-bazar-bangladesh]

⁷ 84% of Rohingya respondents answered ‘Yes’ to the question “Do you think you have enough information to make good decisions in general for you and your family?” This was the same question asked in the Internews Information Needs Assessment in October 2017.

⁸ As outlined in the research challenges, low response rate to the online survey has made it difficult to gather quantitative evidence against this indicator. Examples of how agencies have used common service tools and services are included later in the report.

⁹ To test whether differences between groups (such as men and women) were significant, significance testing was carried out using a T-test. Throughout this report, only differences between two ‘groups’ where p=0.05 or less are reported as significant.
What are Rohingya and host communities’ priorities at the moment?

Over half of the Rohingya community feel their life has improved since arriving in the camps, and a third are optimistic about the future. This contrasts with the host community, who feel their quality of life has decreased, and think that their lives will get worse over the coming six months.

This is most likely because the Rohingya community fled Myanmar due to the hardships they faced, and feel safer and to some extent better looked after in the camps. The host community however, are now sharing limited land, resources and jobs with the Rohingya refugees.

Both communities feel uncertain about their future: 36% of Rohingya and 38% of host community respondents say they don’t know what their quality of life will be like in six months’ time, and 32% of host community feel their life will get worse, compared with 12% of Rohingya respondents.

Figure 1: Quality of life of last three months

![Graph showing quality of life of last three months for Rohingya and host communities.]

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750), Host Community (n=750).
Q. In the last three months [or since arrived], would you say your quality of life has...

Figure 2: Perceived future quality of life

![Graph showing perceived future quality of life for Rohingya and host communities.]

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750), Host Community (n=750).
Q. How do you feel your quality of life will be in six months’ time? Do you think it will be...
Not having enough food is the biggest worry for both host (21%) and Rohingya communities (22%). The other main concern amongst Rohingya people is not having enough fuel to cook (22%), while for the host community it is not having enough work (21%).

Analysis of feedback data collected by different agencies involved in the humanitarian response has highlighted that lack of food and firewood are key concerns in the camps (highlighted in the 7th issue of the ‘What Matters?’ Bulletin). Lack of cooking fuel has been raised as a key issue by Rohingya people since the beginning of the monsoon season, as it is difficult to go to the forest, and the firewood is too wet to burn.

Discussions within the Betar Sanglap radio programme, which invites host communities to discuss issues they are facing, emphasised that earning a living was their main concern, for three reasons: fishing restrictions put in place to reduce cross-border movement of people; cheaper Rohingya workers pushing the daily wage down; and a perception that agricultural land is being taken up by the Rohingya camps.

**How have information needs and access to information changed for Rohingya and host communities since October 2017?**

Access to information has increased, with the majority of Rohingya people (84%) and host community (89%) reporting that they have enough information to make decisions for themselves and their families.

This has increased since the assessment in October 2017, when only 23% of Rohingya people and 16% of the host community said they had enough information to make decisions. Both communities also said they felt it had become easier to get information to make decisions over the last six months (75% of Rohingya people and 56% of the host community).

This increase in access to information reflects better organisation in the camps, with residents now being more settled than back in October. Information is being shared with communities more systematically via mahjis (Rohingya community leaders). Agencies and coordinators in most camps are now sharing information with mahjis in weekly meetings, which they pass on to people living in their block. There are also more information services such as 68 information hubs now in place.

**How informed do Rohingya people feel?**

The Rohingya community feel they have enough information on healthcare, safety and security, but feel less confident about keeping their family safe in a cyclone. When asked whether they have enough information to make decisions about healthcare and safety and security, over 80% of Rohingya people said they did. However, only 61% of Rohingya people said they thought that they had enough information to keep their family safe in a cyclone.

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10 See the ‘What Matters?’ Humanitarian Bulletin, issue 7 (July 11th) for more information about the cooking fuel crisis and livelihood fears amongst the host community http://www.shongjog.org.bd/news/i?id=d6ea30a3-be19-4747-bb90-64f0255ef97

11 See ‘What Matters?’ issue 7, as per footnote 10.
compared with 82% of the host community. This difference may be because Cox’s Bazar has experienced devastating cyclones in the past, and the government has historically put extensive resources into cyclone preparedness efforts for host communities in the area.

Sixty three percent of Rohingya respondents feel well informed about services available in the camps. How well informed people felt about services available increased with age with 68% of the oldest group (65+) stating they felt informed compared to 52% of the youngest group (18-19 year olds).

Seventy three percent of Rohingya respondents said they felt well informed about how to keep themselves and their families safe. A higher proportion of Rohingya women feel well informed about how to keep themselves and their families safe (76%, compared to 70% of men).

Only 41% of the community said they felt informed about their options for the future, and the data collection process highlighted that people have many unanswered questions. During the fieldwork, 30% of Rohingya survey respondents asked questions to the enumerators, which were seeking information about their needs, rather than asking questions about the survey. The most frequently asked questions were whether they knew where to collect relief, or whether they knew anything about their repatriation or the Bangladesh Government’s plans for the Rohingya people. This suggests that while the Rohingya community feel better informed than when they first arrived, they still have many questions, particularly around their future.

What are the main sources of information for the Rohingya community?
The main source of information for Rohingya people remains the mahjis, who are more trusted now than back in October 2017. Among the Rohingya community 87% mentioned mahjis as their main source of information, and 70% said mahjis were the source of information they trusted the most. In October 2017, despite being ranked as the main source of information for Rohingya, mahjis were ranked seventh in most trusted sources of information,
after friends and family, religious and community leaders, radio, mobile phone calls, and the army/police. Trust in mahjis has increased, most likely because the information sharing system is much more structured now, and agencies and camp coordinators work with mahjis to share information with communities. Mahjis are therefore most likely sharing more reliable information, and are consequently more trusted as sources of information.

Figure 3: Main information sources – Rohingya community

![Bar chart showing the main information sources for Rohingya community members. The chart indicates that Mahji is the most trusted source with 87%, followed by Friends or family with 39%. Religious leaders, Army or Police, NGO or UN staff, and Community leaders are also trusted, with percentages ranging from 21% to 14%. Mobile phone calls, Loudspeakers, Internet news, Radio, Television, Community leader, Newspapers, and Other sources are trusted to a much lesser extent.]

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750).
Q. Since you arrived here, what are your main ways of finding out information here?

Figure 4: Most trusted information sources – Rohingya community

![Bar chart showing the most trusted information sources for Rohingya community members. The chart indicates that Mahji is the most trusted source with 70%, followed by Friends or family with 11%. Religious leader, Army or Police, NGO or UN staff, and Mobile phone calls are also trusted, with percentages ranging from 10% to 6%. Internet news, Radio, Loudspeakers, Television, Community leader, Newspapers, and Other sources are trusted to a much lesser extent.]

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750).
Q. Which sources do you trust the most to give you the information you need at the moment?
What are the information needs?
Information needs remain in line with the biggest concerns for both communities. The host community’s information needs have shifted from safety to concerns over livelihoods and resources. The Rohingya community said they need to know how to get cooking fuel and food, in line with their biggest concerns. Rohingya men are more concerned than women with seeking information on what is happening in Myanmar, while women are more focused on fuel and food. The host community’s concerns have shifted from needing information on how to stay safe, and preventing attacks in October 2017, to how to earn a living and whether they will be able to afford to buy enough food and obtain safe drinking water. This is in line with the concerns expressed by host communities that they are losing their livelihoods. The host community has also been concerned about ground water running low and becoming contaminated, due to the increased number of people now depending on the water source.

Figure 5: Main information needs – Rohingya community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Need</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to access cooking fuel/firewood</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access food</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access money/financial support</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access water</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The security situation at home</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News on what is happening at home</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750), female (n=375), male (n=375).
Q. There are many different things people are confused about or feel they need to know about. What is the main thing you need to know about right now? Graph includes top 6 information needs mentioned.

Figure 6: Main information needs – host community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Need</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to access money/financial support</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access water</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access food</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access cooking fuel/firewood</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to access shelter/accommodation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to find work</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Base: Host Community (n=750), female (n=375), male (n=375).
Q. There are many different things people are confused about or feel they need to know about. What is the main thing you need to know about right now? Graph includes top 6 information needs mentioned.
What kind of information services are people accessing, and how?
Over a fifth (21%) of Rohingya people had attended an information hub and the majority said they would recommend it to others. A higher proportion of Rohingya men (26%) than women (16%) had visited, despite some of the information hubs being in nutrition centres for women and children. Of the Rohingya people who had visited an information hub, most had visited multiple times: 42% said they had visited four times or more, only 8% had only visited once. Over three quarters of Rohingya information hub visitors (76%) would recommend the information hub to their friends and family, and 81% said ‘yes’, when asked if any of the staff spoke the Rohingya language.

The main reasons for Rohingya people visiting an information hub were to find information and give feedback, indicating there is a demand for these services. The majority of Rohingya people who visited information hubs (81%) did so to seek information. The second most frequently stated reason was to complain or give feedback (27%). Only 13% said it was because they were going to another service in the same building, which indicates that people are actively seeking somewhere they can get information and did not visit the hub by chance.

Video content is being watched. A quarter of the Rohingya community (26%) said they had seen short videos or animations which give information to people living in the camps, with younger people accessing them the most (40% of 18–19 year olds). Over half (56%) of people who had seen the videos or animations said they had seen the content on someone else’s mobile phone. Key informant interviews with agency staff found that they encouraged community health workers and other volunteers to download audio visual content in the Rohingya language from the Shongjog platform to show to community members, which could explain this finding. Over a third (36%) said they had seen content on their own mobile phone, rising to 50% of 18-19 year olds. Rohingya people also said they had seen videos or animations at an information centre (7%), a health clinic (6%) or other community spaces (9%).
Regular radio listenership remains low in the camps and among the host community. Only 13% of Rohingya and 14% of the host community said that someone in their household had listened to the radio in the last week. In October 2017, 21% of the host and Rohingya population said they currently listened to the radio, with 51% of those who didn’t listen saying this was because they didn’t have access to a radio set and 25% saying because they had no access to electricity. A distribution of 60,000 radio sets during 2018 was expected to increase radio listenership, but cultivating a regular radio audience may take time if radio is not usually part of people’s lives.

Although radio listenership is low, almost a fifth (18%) of people in the Rohingya community have been reached by one of the audio programmes being made for them. Almost one in five (18%) of the Rohingya community said they had listened to one of the programmes, which are being made to share information with people living in the camps, either at home, at a listener group or in a community space. Bala Bura, the audio programme being produced as part of this project to address rumours in the camps, is reaching 6% of Rohingya people through community broadcasts. Begunnor Lai, a radio programme made for Rohingya refugees by local radio station Bangladesh Betar, is reaching 11% of the Rohingya community through weekly radio broadcasts and listener groups. Shishur Hashi, another radio programme made by local station Radio Naf is reaching 7% of the Rohingya community 12.

Six percent of Rohingya respondents said they had listened to one of the radio programmes at a listener group. Qualitative research carried out with listener group attendees, as well as collated feedback from listener group members showed that people appreciate the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about issues raised in the programmes at listener groups, and that they share the information they learn from the programmes with their friends and family.

Communications initiatives linked to the common service are reaching 45% of Rohingya respondents. Of Rohingya respondents, 45% said they had listened to one of the radio programmes, visited an information hub or watched video content.

How are communities communicating with aid providers and using feedback mechanisms?
How are the Rohingya community communicating with aid providers?
Mahjis are the main channel the Rohingya community say they are using to communicate with aid providers. When asked about the main way they communicate with aid providers or local authorities, 38% of Rohingya people mentioned speaking with a mahji, followed by 9% who said they use information hubs, 8% who speak with a community or religious leader, and 7% who speak with foreign NGO staff or Rohingya volunteers.

Sixty five percent of Rohingya women and 49% of Rohingya men said they couldn’t talk to aid providers, indicating that the language barrier remains challenge. In October 2017, 62% of people in the host and Rohingya community said they couldn’t speak to aid providers, compared with 55% in this recent study. When asked in this recent study if aid providers spoke

12 Begunnor Lai and Shishur Hashi are funded by UNICEF under a different project. All radio programmes are available on the Shongjog website to be used by practitioners.
their language, 59% of Rohingya refugees said that some of them did, indicating they were talking about local staff. Almost a third (31%) said yes, aid providers did speak their language, 9% said no, and 1% said they didn’t know. This question was not asked in the October assessment.

How are agencies communicating with communities?

Key informant interviews with agency representatives found that organisations are communicating with communities in different ways. To understand communities’ needs, agencies carry out surveys and needs assessments, and hold focus group discussions with Rohingya men and women.

Many of the organisations involve Rohingya people in their activities as community mobilisation volunteers, or community health workers. These volunteers help agencies communicate better with communities as they speak Rohingya, are trusted as they are from the same community and can build a rapport more easily, and have a good understanding of the community’s needs and issues.

Organisations explained they collect feedback at information hubs, women friendly spaces, and from feedback boxes. Volunteers inform the community about these services.

The language barrier is still the major challenge faced by agencies. There is a lack of skilled interpreters, interpreters are very costly, and some things are lost in translation between Chittagonian and Rohingya. Practitioners praised the work of Translators without Borders but said it was impossible for one agency to serve the whole response.

Recruiting female volunteers from the Rohingya community is also a challenge, as their families don’t give them permission to volunteer.

Who is giving feedback, and how satisfied are they with what happens next?

Over a quarter (26%) of people in the Rohingya community have given feedback, and satisfaction with how feedback and complaints have been dealt with is high. The majority of people who gave feedback (82%) said they were either quite or very satisfied with what happened next, and 61% said they would give feedback again in the same way.

Rohingya men are more likely to have given feedback than women, and a higher proportion have given feedback personally. However, Rohingya women were more likely to be satisfied with what happened next. Only 15% of Rohingya women have given feedback personally compared with 27% of Rohingya men, most likely because they are restricted in

Community outreach members are familiar in their community and sometimes people request them to visit their houses. People love to talk and share their stories with the outreach workers and through these stories we come to know about their needs and feedbacks.

*NGO participant, Pulse Bangladesh*
leaving the house. Although a lower proportion of Rohingya women have given feedback, their levels of satisfaction were higher: 98% of women were satisfied with what happened next, compared with 71% of Rohingya men. This may be because the nature of the issues they are raising is different. In an analysis of the Solidarités International dataset of 656 cases, it was found that 67% of women’s complaints remained unresolved compared to 56% of men’s. This was reported in the ‘What Matters?’ Bulletin, Issue 6.¹³

How are people giving feedback, and what happens when they do?
Rohingya communities continue to give feedback and make complaints face-to-face, rather than using SMS, voice calls or complaints boxes. Although many feedback mechanisms have been set up since the information needs assessment in October 2017, both Rohingya people and the host community still prefer to give feedback face-to-face. This is likely to be because literacy levels are low, and people are not used to having the option to share their concerns anonymously, and, moreover, that it results in a more direct response. This is consistent with the recent study by Translators without Borders, where 88% of the 407 Rohingya refugees they spoke to prefer to receive humanitarian information by word of mouth, and 99% prefer to receive information aurally, in spoken Rohingya.¹⁴ This is in line with previous research on communication within humanitarian responses, which has found that communities prefer face-to-face communication and dialogue.¹⁵

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¹⁴ Translators without Borders (September 2018) Language Needs Assessment, Cox’s Bazar.
The majority of Rohingya people are giving feedback through talking to a mahji (80%), although over a quarter of people said they spoke to NGO staff (26%), and one fifth (19%) said they had given feedback at an information hub. Interestingly a higher proportion of women (23%) than men (16%) reported giving feedback at an information hub, while men were more likely to be the ones speaking to military or community leaders (7%, compared with 1% of women).

Figure 9: How feedback is given – Rohingya community

Q. Have you or your family ever provided any feedback or complained about anything since you have been here? (If yes) How did you do it?

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750), female (n=375), male (n=375).
Most Rohingya people said they would give feedback again, but a quarter of women said they would give it in a different way. While 65% of men and 55% of women said they would give feedback again in the same way, a quarter (24%) of women said they would give feedback again but in a different way, compared with 10% of men. Future qualitative research could explore the reasons for this, or how they would prefer to give feedback next time. Qualitative research carried out by BBC Media Action in July 2018 found that women did not want to raise issues linked to gender based violence for fear of them being written down, as this could then result in a backlash by the perpetrators, who could use the fact that it was written down as proof.

After giving feedback, 37% of Rohingya people said their problem was resolved, and 32% said they received a response right away. Two thirds (66%) of Rohingya respondents said they received a response within one week. There were 15% of people who said nothing had happened yet.

Figure 10: What happened in response to feedback?

- My problem was resolved: 37%
- Received a response straight away: 32%
- Nothing has happened yet: 15%
- Someone else came to my shelter to talk to me about it later: 14%
- I was advised to ask someone else: 9%
- Received a response by text: 1%

Figure 11: Time taken to receive a response

- Within one week: 66%
- Within one month: 21%
- More than 30 days: 11%
- Never: 2%
- Refused/no answer: 1%

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750)
Q. Have you or your family ever provided any feedback or complained about anything since you have been here? What happened next?

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750)
Q. How many days did it take to receive a response?
What are the barriers to giving feedback or making complaints?
The biggest barrier for Rohingya people to giving feedback or making complaints is not knowing how to. Women are more likely than men to say they don’t know how, or don’t have the skills to use feedback mechanisms. A higher proportion of younger people feel they lack the skills to use the mechanisms (22% of 18-19 year olds, compared with 8% of the Rohingya community in general). Very few people in this study said they were afraid to give feedback, or felt uncomfortable doing so, which contrasts with the qualitative research, which showed that people were afraid of giving feedback in case aid and support was taken away from them. Interestingly only 2% of Rohingya people mentioned ‘I don’t think anything would change’, suggesting that they do not feel apathetic about giving feedback.

Almost half (42%) of the Rohingya community said they do not face any barriers to giving feedback. When asked ‘are there any barriers that are currently preventing you from giving feedback or making a complaint?’ over half of Rohingya men (51%) and a third of Rohingya women (33%) said they faced no barriers.

Figure 12: Barriers to giving feedback – Rohingya Community

Base: Rohingya Community (n=750), female (n=375), male (n=375).
Q. Are there any barriers that are currently preventing you from giving feedback or making a complaint?
Weekly live phone-in programme at Bangladesh Betar (Credit: BBC Media Action)

How are host communities raising issues and complaints?
The host community said they gave feedback or made complaints to their community leaders (30%) or friends and family (27%), reflecting that they have less contact with NGOs, and share concerns with those around them in a less formal way. This reflects the fact that although some humanitarian agencies are providing services to the host communities, and information hubs and feedback mechanisms are in the process of being set up, these were not yet active at the time of this survey. Host communities did not have access to formal feedback mechanisms in the way the Rohingya community did at this time, meaning the question was less relevant to them.

Not knowing about feedback mechanisms was the biggest barrier to giving feedback for the host community (21%). A higher proportion (6%) also felt that nothing would change if they gave feedback, compared with 2% of the Rohingya community.

What difference is the common service making to how agencies are communicating with communities?
The survey found that access to information for communities has improved over the last six months, that people are not reporting as many barriers to giving feedback, and general satisfaction with responses to feedback is relatively high.

The following section of the report investigates how practitioners are using the tools and services and developed by the common service.
**Demand and uptake of services**

The number of agencies using the tools and services produced by the common service in their work is difficult to determine, because once content has been created and uploaded on to the website it can be used by anyone. The diagram below gives an indication of how different services have been used by agencies, based on project monitoring by the consortium partners. At least 33 agencies, seven task forces and four sectors have used services or tools provided by the common service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Number of Agencies/Training Provided</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 agencies given advice on communicating with communities messaging/feedback protocol design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 agencies trained in content creation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two agencies trained in contribution to radio distribution planning and training (coordination and info. management)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter training and support given to two agencies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Translation support provided to 18 agencies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rohingya Language workshops provided to eight agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 4000 unique users of Shongjog website</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Three agencies given logo design and pre-testing training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening group training and mentoring to seven agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research collaboration on feedback with one organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189 weekly subscribers to “What Matters?” humanitarian bulletin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four agencies trained to overcome language barriers in data collection</td>
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Practitioners’ perspectives on common service tools and activities

This section is based on nine key informant interviews carried out with staff from UN agencies, (I)NGOs and local media.

Agencies are using services and tools produced by the common service to help them understand needs and communicate with the Rohingya people and host communities. Each practitioner interviewed had used at least three of the services or tools, of which the Shongjog website was the most cited.

### Common service tools and services used by practitioners

- **Shongjog website**
- ‘What Matters?’ Bulletin
- Common messages/audio visual products
- *Flying News* rumour bulletin
- Translation, simplification and contextualisation services
- Multilingual glossary and terminology development and support
- Support to start and run listener groups
- Support to establish accountability/feedback systems

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**Shongjog Website**

Practitioners found the Shongjog website made their work more efficient, as it contains relevant and accurate communication materials shared by different agencies. The Shongjog website was appreciated by practitioners because it acts as a common platform for communication materials relevant to the affected communities’ needs and demands. As different organisations working in different sectors (health, shelter, protection, nutrition, WASH and others) share their work on the website, it makes it easy for other organisations to use existing information or materials which are already in the right language and have been developed for use with the affected community. Practitioners felt this results in organisations working more efficiently, it means consistent information is being disseminated more widely, and is making communication with communities easier and more effective.

*“Shongjog is a great platform. Lots of agencies and lots of organisations can get materials on specific needs and specific context such as health, nutrition and WASH. It’s a website where one can get all the information and means people don’t need to go to other sites. It gives the most accurate and relevant information and means humanitarian agencies can quickly roll-out information to the community.”*

*INGO participant, UNICEF*

Audio visual content from Shongjog is being used widely to engage Rohingya communities. NGO practitioners reported that being able to download audio visual content from the Shongjog website has saved them time and energy, and has helped them to engage the
Rohingya community, as the content is in their language. Audio visual content on health, including diphtheria, pregnancy care, nutrition, and hygiene was perceived to be particularly useful, as was information on shelter and tackling rumours. One media practitioner used audio clips from Shongjog on his radio programme during the diphtheria outbreak, and a World Health Organisation practitioner referred people to the Shongjog website during her training sessions. Practitioners from a medical NGO recommended the Shongjog website to community health workers, who now search the website and download messages and short videos onto their phones, which they then show to communities during their door-to-door visits. The community health workers use the content as a visual aid, to engage communities and pass on vital information.

Suggestions from practitioners

- Improve the search function on the Shongjog website, including the ability to navigate by sector
- Let more people know about the Shongjog website and the materials available

The ‘What Matters?’ Bulletin was appreciated as an important initiative in a humanitarian response, to help agencies understand the communities’ concerns. Participants who had read the bulletin felt it was a useful initiative to bring the voice of communities to humanitarian agencies. The quotations and trend analyses from the camps were found to be particularly useful, and some practitioners said they shared the bulletin with others.

“One organisation can’t do everything. We need to work together. It’s a good initiative [the ‘What Matters?’ Bulletin] of BBC Media Action, Internews and TWB. It helps us to understand what the situation on the ground is.”

INGO participant

Suggestions from practitioners

- Ensure the content is up-to-date and relevant for frontline humanitarian practitioners
- Consult with sector experts or specialists to provide information on key issues raised
- Have a section of the bulletin dedicated to one particular sector, depending on the priorities at that time
- Disaggregate information by camp, so practitioners can find information relevant to the camp they are working in
**Translation services**
The quality and quantity of interpreters has increased thanks to Translators without Borders, but availability of skilled, affordable interpreters remains a challenge. Most of the agencies used interpreters trained by Translators without Borders and appreciated this service, but practitioners noted that there was still a need, as it is impossible for one agency to serve the whole response.

Glossaries are helpful when trying to translate technical jargon. Practitioners felt that much is often lost in translation between Chittagonian and Rohingya, especially when translating technical terminology. One practitioner mentioned that the glossaries produced by Translators without Borders had been helpful in overcoming this challenge.

**Other tools and services**
Practitioners found the *Flying News* rumour bulletin helped them to understand what is going through people’s minds in the camps. One practitioner said this resulted in their agency thinking through how they could tackle rumours organisationally.

Support to run listener groups was mentioned as valuable, as there is no radio coverage in Teknaf camp, but people clearly enjoy attending listener groups to listen to programmes.

One practitioner said the *Begunno Lai* radio programme engaged community members in the camps. They were particularly engaged during the phone-in sessions where experts answered people’s questions.
Conclusion and recommendations

Common service
Access to information for the Rohingya community is improving and people feel better equipped to make decisions for themselves and their families. There are still clear information needs that should be addressed and these will continue to vary over time, and according to population groups.

The role of mahjis is becoming increasingly important, as they continue to be a key source of information for the Rohingya community. This group needs to be understood more, as they play a key role in influencing and communicating with people, and are often trusted by the community. Therefore, more qualitative research is required to understand mahjis, imams and other community influencers, particularly how they manage feedback and complaints from community members. This will be undertaken as part of this scope of work and will be carried out in the following months.

A good number of Rohingya people are giving feedback (26%) and the vast majority are satisfied with how feedback is being responded to. However, there are gender differences in how men and women access feedback mechanisms. This is always going to be complex, as it is hard to recruit female Rohingya speaking volunteers. However, the common service needs to ensure that they remain as a key target group and organisations are supported to communicate with women and understand their needs. There is evidence that the products and services being created through the common service are being taken up by practitioners and used – and practitioners say it is helping them to communicate with the Rohingya community better, particularly when relevant content is ready-to-use in the Rohingya language.

Though the evaluation did not seek to provide data against the overall impact indicator around the percentage of people who report being better able to access services or receiving improved services from relief providers due to CwC provision, there is evidence from this evaluation that supports the steps towards this. For example, among those who gave feedback, 37% of Rohingya people said their problem was resolved. Also – humanitarian agencies provided examples of how using the common service products had helped them work more efficiently, and communicate with the Rohingya community in their own language. The data shows that host communities have increasing concerns particularly around livelihoods and finance, and there is the potential of ever growing tension between refugees and host communities. The common service platform therefore needs to provide more support to practitioners to communicate with host communities on these key areas.

Overall response
The report highlights some key areas where communication efforts could be improved within the whole response:

Enabling women to give feedback: It is difficult to recruit female volunteers to engage with communities, therefore more visits to households and more integration with women’s groups may help. This can be discussed in the Communication for Communities Information hubs sub working group.

Communicating with host communities: Explore ways to engage and inform host communities about livelihood and finance opportunities, as these areas of great concern for them.
Radio programme listener group leader (Credit: Mukta Saha Roy)