This thematic report shares the results and recommendations drawn from a series of perception surveys conducted with guest and host communities in Ukhia and Teknaf sub-districts by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) team between 1-21 August 2019. The team convened 41 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), with an additional 52 door-to-door household interviews conducted before and after the FGDs. Given changes to the context after the survey dates – and to further support our analysis – the BDRCS survey information is supplemented by secondary sources.¹

This is one of three reports representing key transecting issues emerging from the August surveys: 1) safety and protection, 2) social cohesion and 3) livelihoods (host community). The data collected from the surveys supports our understanding of the needs of both the displaced community from Rakhine as well as the surrounding host communities in Cox's Bazar. The information will be used to inform the Red Cross Red Crescent’s Population Movement Operation (PMO) response and promote further inquiry.

Key findings

- There is an even split between displaced community respondents who feel safe in their day-to-day activities, and those who do not.

- Camp security improvements over the last year are attributed by members of the guest community to increased investment in site development and more systematic delivery of humanitarian services. But others have seen increases in conflict and criminal activity, and a deterioration of host community tolerance towards them.

- Scarcity of drinking water is cited as another source of tension between the two communities. This resonates with the findings of previous community-

¹ On 25 August 2019, approximately 100,000 residents of Kutupalong’s Modhuchhara camp gathered together to commemorate the second anniversary of their arrival in Bangladesh, an event that may have influenced responses in the household interviews conducted after that time. This report draws on secondary sources to supplement the BDRCS survey data and ensure currency of analysis.
consultations but contrasts with a recent Joint Multi-sector Needs Assessment reporting that most host and guest community households – excluding residents in Teknaf – reported accessing improved water sources for drinking and cooking.³

• The more immediate safety-related fears among the displaced community respondents are: the risk of landslides, lack of visibility at night (when using facilities) due to the absence of street lighting, and extortion at local markets. Their longer-term protection-related concerns relate to movement restrictions, their continued lack of citizenship, and rumors and misinformation about action towards longer-term solutions (e.g. repatriation and relocation).

• In contrast, the majority of host community respondents reported a definite deterioration in security, which is largely attributed to the overcrowded living situation since the influx. Many perceive that anti-social activities and conflicts have increased in the past two years, citing examples of theft of domestic animals, crops and firewood. Other related concerns are prostitution, human trafficking and drug use and selling.

• Host community security concerns extend to proof-of-identity obligations, which can affect their own mobility, and a perceived lack of capacity of the local government authorities to provide adequate protection since the influx. Other frequently cited concerns include environmental degradation, frequency of road accidents, and the perceived cultural “dominance” of guest community members in the area.

• Both guest and host communities expressed concerns regarding child safety, namely road accidents and child trafficking. Bangladeshi parents also worry about lack of play space and the influence of a dominant Rohingya culture, while additional guest community concerns focus on safety of girls threatened by movement restrictions, confinement in congested shelters, inadequate toilet and bathing facilities and, in some registered camps, child prostitution.

The bigger picture

The BDRCS surveys reveal vulnerabilities in both the guest and host communities whose livelihood systems – access to markets, institutions and civil society – have been limited since the influx. Deliberate restrictions of movement, both externally and self-imposed, only add to these vulnerabilities, particularly for the guest community whose fears are bound up in experiences of violence and insecurity.

The role of local and national media is important in this context. Reporting on security and other issues, without adequate substantiation or sensitisation, is likely to aggravate the spread of rumours and promote fear and tension within and among communities.

It is no surprise, then, that safety and security in the camps was selected by a panel of experts from different humanitarian agencies working in Cox’s Bazar as a key priority. It is a broad topic, covering issues of crime, personal safety and health and safety, in a context of increasing tensions between guest and host communities.

Guest community

The guest community is overwhelmingly young, with a high incidence of female headed households. Their protection vulnerabilities are extremely high, and not helped by poor shelter conditions, the threat of extreme weather impacts (such as landslides), and lack of economic and social opportunities, compounded by a lack of certainty for the future.

³ What Matters, February 2019, Issue 19 reveals that inadequate supply of drinking water is a cause of conflict, as well as lack of facilities to dispose of rubbish and disputes over water usage rights.
³ MSNA Technical Working Group, October 2019, Joint Multi-sector Needs Assessment Key Findings: refugees and host communities.
³ BBC Media Action, March 2019, Foresight: An insight into the emerging concerns in the Rohingya response (Safety and Security issue); also prioritised in 2019 JRP Mid-term Review; and Ground Truth, June 2019, Safety and Outlook.
The BDRCS surveys also pick up on some of the operations-level human rights issues in Cox’s Bazar already identified by IOM, UNHCR, and ACAPS evaluations and needs assessments:

- Lack of recognised legal status – vulnerability to protection risks
- Restricted access to the formal justice system reduces the guest community to using an informal conciliation model (led by community leaders), which arguably reinforces harmful gender power dynamics and lends itself to the risk of corruption.7
- Restricted freedom of movement (issues of access, dependency, leading to economic stress, reliance on aid, psycho-social needs, etc.)
- National policy restrictions on civil documentation, education and right to work (i.e. lack of access to formal education and portable skills opportunities) representing protection risks and leading to harmful coping mechanisms, e.g. sexual exploitation, child marriage, trafficking.

Harmful coping mechanisms are also cited in the Joint Multi-sector Needs Assessment (JMSNA), which reported 95 percent of household respondents engaging in coping strategies (69 percent borrowing money) due to a lack of money to meet basic needs (compared to 56 percent in host community). In addition, a recent UNICEF survey indicates that women and children, in particular, are reduced to “selling their remaining assets, participating in the illegal drug trade or engaging in transactional sex, to mitigate economic and food insecurity.”9 UNICEF survey respondents went even further to suggest that this economic distress and a lack of perceived security for women in the camp might serve as a catalyst for child marriage.10

The BDRCS surveys reveal comparatively little detail relating to these gendered dynamics, but this may be due to the absence of specific questions relating to gender-based violence or exploitation. Also worth noting is the general reluctance (or limited capacity) of women to report these issues. This can be due to social or cultural norms, a lack of trust in humanitarian service providers, or knowledge gaps in terms of a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes gender-based violence.11

Host community

Host community perceptions, across the board, revolve more around economic and security issues, which respondents correlate directly to the influx of guest community arrivals to their area. These and other perceptions regarding the power and dominance of the guest community have significant implications for social harmony between the two communities – an issue that is addressed in another report in this series.

Supporting – and at times influencing (or even inflaming) – the perceptions of the host community on these issues is the news media. They commonly promote stories that implicate guest community members in drugs and human trafficking13, as well as petty crime, attempts to establish dominance and incidents of internal conflict.14 The visibility of law enforcement in the camps adds further weight to these views – a strong police presence suggests heightened security concerns, whether or not that presence is in fact a response to community demands for greater protection. Just as ambiguous is the belief that some men from the guest community may be working as “contract killers” being paid to do the “dirty work” of local criminal elements.15

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7 International Rescue Committee, 2019, Access to justice for Rohingya and host community in Cox’s Bazar.
8 MSNA Technical Working Group, October 2019, op cit.
9 UNICEF, October 2019, Current level of knowledge, attitudes, practices, and behaviours (KAPB) of the Rohingya refugees and host community in Cox’s Bazar. A report on findings from the baseline survey.
10 There is already anecdotal evidence that child marriage is commonly practiced among the guest community: https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/gender-brief-rohingya-refugee-crisis-response-bangladesh-october-2017. They now live in a country with the highest rate of marriage involving girls under the age of 15 in the world, and where 150,000 to 200,000 children and young women have been trafficked into prostitution: https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/08/bangladesh-child-marriage-human-trafficking-crisis/
11 UNICEF, op cit.
12 Similar results from Internnews Information Needs Assessment, Jan-Apr 2019.
For all of these reasons, the guest community is perceived as a threat to the safety and security of the host community and, according to the recent JSMNA, this extends to concerns about protection.\(^\text{16}\)

In addition – and as indicated by the host community’s perceptions of guest community engagement in terrorist activity – the high population of children in the camps is regarded as seriously vulnerable to the threat of radicalisation. This is especially prevalent as their marginalisation continues and they face longer-term deprivations. While the rights of the child are vital, this is also seen by the Government of Bangladesh as a security issue, particularly given that any hope of repatriation remains a long-term vision.\(^\text{17}\)

**Looking ahead**

**Short term**

- Almost half of the guest community respondents suggested improvements could be made to their security through ongoing site development – constructing better roads and staircases in the camps, repairing houses, improving the drainage system and building protection walls to prevent landslides. While Ground Truth Solutions suggest that there has been progress on safety, they do agree that more could be done given the continued anxiety around monsoon and cyclone periods, and other concerns related to camp lighting and WASH provisions.\(^\text{18}\)

- To reduce current tensions and conflict, host community respondents suggested that humanitarian agencies should increase their recruitment of host community volunteers, particularly for activities outside of the camps, such as infrastructure development.

- For volunteer services inside the camps, any use of host community volunteers would require sensitivity to the potential stigma attached to mixing with the guest community.\(^\text{19}\) For Red Cross Red Crescent Partners, it will be important to continue investments in the capacity of the 300 Red Crescent Youth volunteers from the local Cox’s Bazar unit, who can volunteer side by side with guest community volunteers.

- Community engagement is critical to dispelling rumours and misinformation. This requires interagency coordination (common messaging) and greater consultation with local authorities, partners and media (substantiating claims).\(^\text{20}\) Authenticating and analysing the quantitative evidence (e.g. crime statistics) is also crucial.\(^\text{21}\)

- Increasing investments from the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank will have major physical impacts in the camps and surrounding areas across the district, including infrastructural impacts. Engagement of both communities in the planning phases of these projects is critical, particularly regarding safety and protection concerns.\(^\text{22}\)

**Medium-to-long term**

- Strong and genuine partnership between communities, authorities and humanitarian actors is critical to responding to pre-existing protection problems and promoting the safety and dignity of affected populations, particularly in protracted crisis contexts.\(^\text{23}\) Red Cross Red Crescent can contribute to this partnership by sharing, demonstrating and promoting the application of its Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) Minimum Standards.

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\(^{16}\) MSNA Technical Working Group, October 2019, op cit.

\(^{17}\) Intelligence briefing by Monirul Islam, Additional Commissioner and Chief, Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, DMP, featured in ABC Radio National podcast 15.11.19, Where to Now? https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/background-briefing/where-to-now/1170556 [00:35:20].

\(^{18}\) Ground Truth Solutions, June 2019, Safety and Outlook Bulletin.

\(^{19}\) BBC Media Action and TWB, October 2019, op cit.

\(^{20}\) Red Cross Red Crescent has previously broadcast RRRC messaging (about repatriation), which was produced by BBC Media Action, as part of the community radio listening program.

\(^{21}\) Current data is limited, with statistics seemingly lacking in detailed contextual analysis or evidential links.

\(^{22}\) This includes the District Development Plan (DDP) currently under consultation, and the IFRC Islamic Development Bank project included in the PMO Emergency Plan of Action 2019-2021.

• Ensuring no one is left behind, Red Cross Red Crescent must reinforce its dual focus on:
  i. Protection mainstreaming, which actively incorporates safety, security and dignity objectives into sectoral programs
  ii. Stand-alone protection interventions, which focus entirely on safety, security and dignity of affected populations.

• Other suggestions made by guest community respondents focused on investments in education and permission to work in Bangladesh, which in turn would reduce criminal activities and help resolve the growing tensions with members of the host community. Recovering people’s access to institutions and livelihood options continues to be one of the biggest challenges in Red Cross Red Crescent protection work.24

• In the absence of such long-term endeavors, given the current context, the need for a formal justice system within the camps becomes even more critical. The International Rescue Committee believes that it would help combat growing instances of violence, and would do so while better protecting the rights of women and children.25 Red Cross Red Crescent partners could consider opportunities to similarly engage in or advocate for justice programming.

25 International Rescue Committee, op cit.
Methodology

To undertake the community perception surveys, the CEA team has used the following data collection methods:

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** (30 with Guest Communities, 11 with Host Communities)
- **Door-to-Door Household Interviews** (29 with Guest Communities, 23 with Host Communities)

**Geographic coverage**
BDRCS has consulted a representative sample of both guest communities and host communities. In terms of vulnerability and opportunities, there is some expected variance among different camps, for example between registered and non-registered camps. The same is applicable for host communities, for example between those living adjacent to the guest community and those living further away. Another consideration is the inclusion of community voices from BDRCS service areas, as well as people living in areas where BDRCS services are not available.

**Age and gender**
The needs, demands and challenges vary among people of different ages and gender. Listening to male, female, elderly and adolescents in separate consultations has been considered for this perception survey.

**Diversity**
Access to rights and entitlements is unequal for different groups of people, including those with disabilities and people with poor mobility. The perception survey takes into account these specific community member needs and views.

**Religion**
People living in the camp and host area follow different religions, which might have implications for their daily needs, livelihood opportunities and perceptions about their situation. Therefore, the religious identity of participants has been considered in this survey, for example by including both Hindu and Muslim groups.

**General people and ‘elite groups’**
There are differences in the perspectives of the general population and community representatives in the survey locations. Local leaders, Majhis, imams and teachers may also have different levels of opportunity to extract resources and to use their power. Therefore, all perspectives have been considered in the perception survey.

**Complementary data**
BDRCS has triangulated the perception data with all information from the BDRCS Feedback Database for the Population Movement Operation. In addition, BDRCS has reviewed secondary data sources to compare and contrast the primary findings. These include the Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) surveys from IOM, Ground Truth perception surveys and the Foresight Service and What Matters bulletins from BBC Media Action.

**Data analysis**
To enter, cluster and analyse the data, the CEA team has made use of an Excel spreadsheet with specific codes for each answer type. All data from the Focus Group Discussions and for the household interviews has been entered and analysed using this tool.

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