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 FDGs. Given changes to the context after the survey dates – and to further support our analysis – the BDRCS survey information is supplemented by secondary sources.

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 has been a significant deterioration in host community perceptions of the displaced population – this is recognised as a stark contrast from the beginning of the influx when the host community reported a sense of solidarity with their guests (largely because of a shared Muslim faith) and provided them with shelter, drinking water, food and other essential items. Guest community members from the older registered camps agree with this observation, noting the increase in social tensions since the 2017 influx.

- Host community respondents identify their most urgent challenges as: 1) Unemployment (reduced labour opportunities and agricultural land, increase in competition for markets and jobs); 2) Increased crime and conflict; 3) Inflation of prices for essential goods and services; and 4) Overpopulation. They correlate these problems to the influx of guest community arrivals to their area.

1 On 25 August 2019, approximately 100,000 residents of Kutupalong’s Modhurchhara 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.
Day-to-day exchanges between the two communities take place, for example, at local tea stalls or when guest community members come to sell items to local people. But most Bangladeshi respondents reported that these are no longer positive interactions.

Host community respondents note significant differences with the displaced population in terms of culture and tradition. They see some members of the displaced community asserting cultural dominance, which the host community fears undermines their local Bangladeshi custom. Because of this they are not interested in any NGO joint programming with the guest community, and they propose separate zoning for camp inhabitants with strong border and security controls.

In addition to increased criminal activity and related security concerns, the practical challenges cited by the host community include: increased cost of living, traffic congestion, scarcity of drinking water, fewer opportunities for income generation, neglect by NGOs who favour the displaced community when recruiting volunteers, restrictions to mobility and communications, and difficulties to secure new passports following incidents of passport falsifications (displaced persons trying to obtain false documents to travel).

Displaced community respondents from the unregistered camps are more positive, with most believing that they live in harmony with the host community and share a strong bond. There were exceptions in some specific camps, where respondents reported being subjected to harsh rules imposed by the host community, resulting in a lack of social cohesion.

The displaced population now reportedly outnumbers the local population of Ukhia and Teknaf Upazilas of Cox’s Bazar by three times. According to a recent IOM Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) report, 84 percent live in camps (majhee-led settlement blocks), 12 percent in camps with host communities, and 4 percent in dispersed sites in host communities.

Tensions between the local community and displaced community have been steadily and noticeably increasing, particularly since mid-August 2019 when the guest community gathered to mark the second anniversary of the 2017 influx. The commemoration was regarded by some in the host community as a provocation by an increasingly dominant guest community, encouraged and supported by a selection of humanitarian agencies.

Host community feedback collected recently by BBC Media Action and Translators Without Borders suggests that the perceived increase in power and influence of the displaced community taps into a deeply seated fear among local people of dispossession at the hands of the guest population who arguably believe that Teknaf and Ukhia originally belonged to their ancestors. In complement to the BDRCS surveys, they report that through a combination of myths and fears, host community members feel that they are now in the minority and are being pushed to leave the area.

The more practical impacts revealed in the BDRCS surveys – congestion, cost of living, scarcity of resources, environmental issues and an alleged rise in criminal activities – are further testing tolerance from the host community. At the same time the experiences of the displaced community, in terms of poor living conditions and restricted access to education and employment, are adding to these tensions.

It is pertinent to note, at this point, that tensions do not only exist between the guest and host populations, but also within each of these communities. A formative study of the culture and traditions of the guest community, for example, reveals the power structures and class divisions that existed before their displacement from Rakhine.

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1 Similar issues recognised by BBC Media Action and Translators Without Borders (TWB), October 2019, What Matters, Issue 29.
2 UNDP, November 2018, Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities.
3 IOM Bangladesh Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM), Site assessment: Round 16 (21 August – 10 October 2019).
5 See also the socio-economic impacts of the influx on host communities in UNDP, op cit.
6 BBC Media Action, August 2018, Power structures, class divisions and entertainment in Rohingya society.
The potential for unrest and violence is therefore palpable, particularly given the scale and length of the crisis.

A separate but compounding issue is the role that local and national media play in terms of the impact that unsubstantiated reporting has on the perception of the host community toward the displaced population. The Additional Commissioner of the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), Mizanur Rahman, has said that in his opinion “99 percent of the reports categorically failed to address the crisis properly”, and that “spreading false information could only increase the chances of flaring up conflicts among the host community and the refugee people.”

How this “community” (both host and guest) can be re-imagined and re-built amid such significant social change is the key question. It begins with an understanding of the reasons for exclusion, which are understood to have many dimensions (economic, social, cultural and political). Drawing on the BDRCS survey data, we can group these into two categories: structural (issues like lack of income, inadequate shelter, restricted access to employment, limited access to education and health) and social backgrounds and identities (exclusion due to discrimination based on perceived or actual characteristics of individuals). Both categories are closely inter-related and mutually reinforcing – discrimination often leads to structural exclusion and vice versa.

Therefore, it is equitable access that will provide the supportive environment required to develop social inclusion programs. Both concepts (equitable access and social inclusion) relate to reducing the risk and instance of violence through promoting equality and reducing community tensions.

Looking ahead

Short term

- Programs must be increasingly targeted at both communities to ensure all needs are addressed. While Red Cross Red Crescent continues to provide essential humanitarian assistance for the guest community, the new Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA) will see further upscaling of activities and interventions for host communities (with support from the Islamic Development Bank).

- When asked for suggestions on how to build better relationships and trust, most of the host community respondents proposed more investments in employment opportunities and aid programs for local citizens. Humanitarian organisations must consider if this recommended action is enough to reduce negative sentiments and lead to more trust and better relationships. Red Cross and Red Crescent must also reconcile this with our fundamental principle of impartiality and our prioritization of those most in need.

- A continued commitment to communicating more effectively with both communities will help to reduce overall tensions. This includes local live radio programming to promote acceptance, avoid stigma and tackle misinformation and misconceptions to create a better-informed community.

- To dispel and contain rumours and misinformation, there needs to be interagency coordination (common messaging) and greater consultation with local authorities, partners and media (substantiating claims). Authenticating and analysing the quantitative evidence (e.g. crime statistics) is also crucial.

Medium-to-long term

- Gender and diversity analysis is critical to understanding the causes of exclusion and the interrelation/intersectionality between them.

- Social inclusion programming – aimed at removing causes of inequality – must also focus on equitable access, which provides a supportive environment for the development of such programming. Given that education is at the heart of these efforts, humanitarian actors must continue advocating for access to

10 See the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Report on the World Social Situation 2016, page 17.
11 IFRC Social Inclusion Framework [draft version]
12 Red Cross Red Crescent EPoA refers to provision of midterm shelters and PASSA trainings, cash-based interventions, construction of permanent health infrastructures (PHCC, MCH) and improvements to water systems and sanitation for households (and schools) in the host community.
education for the displaced population, while at the same time investing in the quality of education for the host community.

- Quality humanitarian programming, accessible to and inclusive of both guest and host communities, must be balanced by government-led strengthening of public service infrastructure and delivery. The District Development Plan (DDP) is currently subject to consultation and interagency discussions with the District Commissioner. It represents a juncture for humanitarian and development interests, and an opportunity for Red Cross Red Crescent to advocate on specific issues affecting the humanitarian objectives of our response.13

- Investments in local journalism projects could help to strengthen the quality of media reporting in Bangladesh, focusing on fact checking and verification of sources.

13 The District Development Plan for Cox’s Bazar, currently in development and supported by the UN, is the first of its kind in Bangladesh and will guide longer-term development investments.
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.