

Rohingya
Community
Feedback

Find out more on page 1

Local indigenous
people's worries

Find out more on page 3

Of Durga and
Dialects

Find out more on page 3

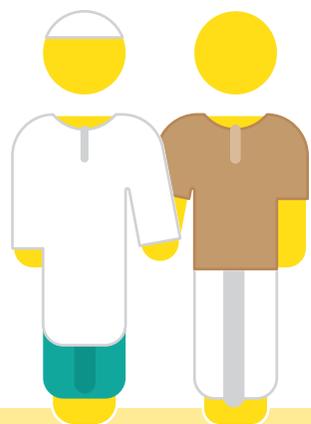
Hindu
community
worried

Find out more on page 4

WHAT MATTERS?

Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin
on Rohingya Response

Issue 14 × Wednesday, October 31, 2018



Rohingya Community Feedback:

Has the relationship between Muslim and Hindu Rohingya people changed?

Source: Feedback collected between September 24 and October 20 by 17 Internews Community Correspondents and one feedback manager using Kobo Collect app in camps 1E, 1W, 2E, 2W, 3 and 4. In total, 1098 interactions have been analysed to present how the relationships between Hindu and Muslim Rohingya people have changed after they fled to Bangladesh. The feedback is collected in Rohingya using English and Bangla script.

Internews

September 23 - October 20, 2018

Total Feedback

1098



680



418

Hindu-Muslim relations among the Rohingya people: past, present and future

“ We invited each other to our festivals and weddings. We had good relationships, but we don't now, but we really think they deserve the same justice and rights.”

– Female, 29, Muslim, camp 3

“ Life was good before. There was no difference except religion. They looked like us. But I don't think we will ever share the relationship like it was before. Because we have lost our people due to them. Now we are living in a country where we don't belong.”

– Female, 25, Hindu, camp 1W

The feedback collected reflects the mutual relationship Hindu and Muslim Rohingya people used to have when they were in Myanmar. Many of the Muslim community members mentioned that, as there were no barbers in their community, Hindu barbers used to come to their area every week to cut their hair. Instead of giving money in return, Muslims used to give them rice at the end of the year so that the barbers could feed their families for the whole year. This reflects the way they were dependent on each other to survive.

Besides the dependence for livelihood, both communities told how they used to celebrate religious festivals and social gatherings together. Things like visiting in the Hindu neighbourhood for Muslims and sharing food between the two communities was common. Many respondents mentioned how similar they felt the two communities are in terms of their looks, and culture besides their religious difference and that they used to share a good relationship between them.

“ We never had any clashes because of our religion. It started because the military tortured Hindu people thinking that they were Muslims. And, we have heard that under instruction of the Myanmar army, Hindu people burned our houses as well.”

– Female, 21, Muslim, camp 2W

“ They were like our brothers. But we suffered for them. We have lost our people and houses for them. Some people said that it's not the Burmese military who killed our people, it's Muslim people who killed them.”

– Male, 32, Hindu, camp 1W

From the analysis of feedback it appears that the relationship between the two communities became tense in August 2017 as both believe that they have suffered because of the other. On the one hand, some Muslim community members have sympathy for the Hindu community because they believe Hindus were tortured, killed and lost their households because the Burmese military thought they were Muslims. On the other hand, some also think that Hindu people followed the instructions of the Burmese military to burn their houses.

Hindu community members stated that they had to go through a lot because of Muslims. Their feedback reflects how they feel they were targeted by the Myanmar army and people in their community were killed and suffered because of Muslims. Some also believe that perhaps the Muslim community also played a role in the violence towards them. Statements from both communities show that, despite their previously harmonious relationship, there is now anger and distrust between the two communities.

“ While we were coming to Bangladesh, we shared our food and helped each other. Now, even though we are living in different camps, we all belong to the same country. We have a strong feeling that if we want to go back to our country, motherland, they would want the same like us. We want justice not only for us; we also want it for them.”

– Male, 49, Muslim, camp 1W

“ I don't know whether we can be like before or not. We don't know whether it is Muslims who killed our people or not. We came here together. But we want to go back to our country. We can be like before if they come with us. We want justice.”

– Female, 38, Hindu, camp 1W

Muslim community members shared that when Hindu and Muslim people escaped to Bangladesh they helped each other on the way. They think the Hindu community also belongs to the same country and they have had the same struggle as Muslims back in Myanmar when the military crackdown happened. They strongly feel Hindu people would feel the desire to return to their home in Myanmar like them. Despite the religious identity, they want justice for everybody who has suffered.

Like the Muslim community, some people from Hindu community mentioned that as they are not clear whether Muslims or other Burmese nationals tortured them and killed their people, they want justice and they want to go back to their country. In addition to that, they also said they can live and share like before with Muslims if the situation changes.

Both community members think that even though they are from different religious backgrounds; they belong to the same country and all they want is to go back to their roots and live in peace and dignity.





Local indigenous people worry about livelihoods and environment

Indigenous people in Cox's Bazar mentioned facing several problems since the Rohingya influx. Many of them earn their livelihood from small businesses like selling vegetables, fish and other necessary things in the market. But nowadays they feel that Rohingya people have taken a big share of their business and are selling not only inside the camps but also in local markets. They also feel that Rohingya people are manipulating the market price of fish. They buy fish from the fishermen at a higher rate than the normal price, as they can afford to sell the fish at a lower profit margin.

“ We used to buy 1 kg fish at 50 BDT. But the Rohingya people buy those fish for a higher price and that is hampering our business.”

– Male, 55, fish businessman

According to indigenous people, the Rohingya influx has also resulted in a price increase for basic commodities, which has made their life harder. Some of the indigenous people also mentioned that they used to go to collect bamboo from the forest to earn their livelihoods by selling them in local market but said that this has now become very difficult as a huge area of forest land has been destroyed. People also said that Rohingya people use the remaining forest areas to collect firewood and that the locals are afraid of coming across them in the forest.

“ Whenever we go outside for work, Rohingya people swear and shout at us. We are always afraid of them. We even stop working because we are afraid.”

– Male, 35, day labourer

Source: Feedback collected from the host community audience of the radio discussion programme Betar Sanglap, recorded at Shamlapur High School in Cox's Bazar on 7 October 2018. This episode was recorded in an area where lots of indigenous people live and so this group made up most of the audience and this analysis is based on these local indigenous people's concerns. The programme is produced by Bangladesh Betar, with support from UNICEF and BBC Media Action.

Indigenous people also said that they have concerns regarding environmental imbalance. According to them, due to excessive destruction of the forest and greeneries the temperature in their local area is increasing day by day.

The indigenous people also have concerns related to health issues. Since the influx they say they are suffering from different diseases and live in fear of an HIV-AIDS outbreak.



Of Durga and Dialects: How religion influences the Rohingya language

The excitement was palpable even before we entered the small camp just outside of Kutupalong megacamp. Though numbering only 200 families, the Hindu Rohingya community was putting on a grand show for their goddess Durga, blasting religious and Bollywood songs simultaneously. Even in the busy anticipation of their most important holiday, we were pleasantly surprised to see the community eagerly talking to us about their language. We were greeted into the camp with a *nomoshkar* (from Sanskrit *namaskaram*), whereas a Muslim Rohingya would say have said *salaam* (from Arabic).

Knowing that religion can shape languages, we wanted to know the difference between the dialect spoken by Muslim and Hindu Rohingya people. As Sanskrit is the religious language of Hinduism, there is a greater influence from that language on the dialect spoken by the Rohingya Hindu community. Words directly related to religious practices and customs, like 'prayers' (*shodona*) and 'priest' (*bon*, from Brahmin) are derived from Sanskrit. Their Muslim counterparts, *namaz* and *imaam* respectively, are borrowed from Farsi and Arabic. This borrowing from Sanskrit makes the Hindu Rohingya dialect closer to Chittagonian

and Bangla. Because of this, there may be fewer communication challenges between aid workers and the Hindu Rohingya community than with the larger Muslim Rohingya community in other camps.

However, the influence of religion on language is not restricted to the mosques and mandirs. It also influences many aspects of daily speech.

Faith and family

Kinship terms vary between the two religions. Words for brother, sister, aunt, uncle, and many other relationship terms differ amongst the two communities. Hindus largely retained their Sanskrit-derived terms, whereas the Muslims borrowed from languages like Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. For example, while Hindu Rohingya speakers use *tri* for wife (from Sanskrit *stri*), Muslim Rohingyas say *bibi* (from Urdu).

Even the words for 'male' and 'female' are different. Among the Hindu Rohingya community, the word for 'male' is *furush* (derived from Sanskrit *purush*), whereas Muslim Rohingya people usually say *morot* (from Persian *mard*). The word for 'female' is *maya-fua* amongst Muslims, while Hindus tend to use *mohila*.

Accessing healthcare

Muslim Rohingya people say they need *dabai* (medicine) for their *biaram* (sickness / disease). Both of these words are borrowed from other Muslim cultures – *dabai* from Arabic and *biaram* from Persian. The Hindu Rohingya community, however, uses words very similar to Bangla - *oshut* for medicine and *oshuk-bishuk* for sickness. It makes sense that other terms derived from these primary words will also be different. For example, Muslims say *dabai goron* for 'treatment'. As *dabai* is not used by Hindu Rohingya people, what would they call 'treatment'? Once again, they use a Sanskrit-derived term, *sigissa* (compare to Bangla, *chikitsa*).

Happy is still khushi

Though we've highlighted some of the linguistic differences between the communities, they communicate with each other easily as they understand these religiously influenced linguistic differences. However, people prefer to use their particular subset of words within their own communities.

Some words that may appear to be religious or religiously influenced are used by both communities. *Shanthe*, meaning peace, is a word deeply rooted in Sanskrit and Hindu culture – is equally used by the Muslim Rohingya community. *Hamil*, an Arabic word meaning 'pregnant', is used by the Hindus as well. The word for 'water' in Bangla is often different for the two religious communities (*paani* for the Muslims and *jol* for the Hindus), but for all Rohingya people, it's *faani*.

A *khushi* or *fereshan* person is a 'happy' or 'upset' person respectively, for Muslims and Hindus alike. Before leaving the camp, we asked a few women how they were feeling about Durga puja. Expecting a slew of distinct psychosocial words, I got my pen and paper ready. But the women laughed instead, and the oldest one spoke for all of them.

How else would we feel?
We're Khushi. Khub, khub Khushi.

Happy. Very, very happy.

Hindu community most worried about health, security, shelter and supplies

Source: In-depth interviews and mini focus group discussions carried out by BBC Media Action with men and women from the Hindu Rohingya community across camp 1 (West Hindu para) during October 2018.

The Hindu Rohingya people living in the camps are most concerned about health service provision. They feel there are not enough doctors or medicine in the health centres and that the centres are only open at specific times. Therefore, to access health services they often escape their own camp (their movement is restricted outside of the overall camp area) to visit doctors in nearby camps or in the local community. They feel that it is expensive to access these services: for example, to visit a doctor, they have to pay 400-500 taka. To afford treatment, most of the Hindu Rohingya community sell some relief items they are given. Others earn income working as a day labourer for different organisations where they earn approximately 400-500 taka per day.

“Our main concern is medical treatment. There is a health centre in our camp, but the doctor is not always available there. The doctor comes late every day and paracetamol and saline are the only medicines provided. Therefore, we need to go outside the camp for medical treatment.”

– Male, 30, camp 1 (Hindu community)

Security is another big concern for the Hindu Rohingya community, who feel that the lack of lighting makes it hard to move within the camp

during the evening. They also feel insecure when they visit the toilets at night, since they are some distance away from their shelter.

The Hindu Rohingya community also fear that they might get attacked by the Muslim Rohingya community because of their bad relationship with them. Hindu community members say that they had a very good relationship with the Muslim Rohingya community while in Myanmar. However, they now feel that this relationship began to break down following the acts of the Myanmar army in mid-2017. They say that, at this time, the Muslim Rohingya community had joined the Arakan militant organisation and had asked Hindu Rohingya people to join with them to build up an independent country only for the Rohingya community. The Hindu Rohingya community did not agree to this and they say that, from this point, the Muslim Rohingya community started to oppress them.

Hindu people were also concerned about their shelters. They felt that the materials they had to build their shelter were not good enough and said that, after the initial distribution of tarpaulin and bamboo, they haven't received any more building materials. They feel that this has caused problems and talked

about how they felt scared when there were rains, as they thought their shelters might collapse and that the floors were too damp for them to sleep on due to water leaking from the ceiling.

Moreover, people from the Hindu community are worried about not receiving enough relief supplies and mentioned that they found it a struggle to collect relief. They said that there is no distribution centre inside their camp and that they have to pay 20-30 taka for transport to go to the nearest Army camp to collect relief. Although they get firewood, feedback from female member of the Hindu Rohingya community is that they would prefer a gas stove, since the smoke from the firewood hurts their eyes and makes it difficult to cook. They were also aware that that Muslim Rohingya people had received gas stoves as relief.

“ When I went to hospital last time, I heard from a Muslim Rohingya person that they had been given a gas stove, but we did not.”

– Female, 32, camp 1 (Hindu community)

How do they see their future?

The Hindu Rohingya community said that, if they got the opportunity, they would want to go back to Myanmar, because they don't feel independent here in Bangladesh. They also said that they didn't feel safe staying with the Muslim Rohingya community and that, if they cannot go to their own country, they want to move to India because of the Hindu population there.

“ For us it will be the best if we could go to India and stay there because majority of the people of India are of the same religion like ours and we would culturally better fit there.”

– Male, 45, camp 1 (Hindu community)

BBC Media Action, Internews, and Translators without Borders are working together to collect and collate feedback from communities affected by the Rohingya crisis. This summary aims to provide a snapshot of feedback received from Rohingya and host communities, to assist sectors to better plan and implement relief activities with communities' needs and preferences in mind.

The work is being delivered in partnership with IOM, the UN migration agency, and is funded by EU humanitarian aid and the UK Department for International Development.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions regarding *What Matters?*, you are welcome to get in touch with the team by emailing info@cxbfeedback.org