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COVID-19 IMPACTS ON REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES

2nd Round Monitoring Report
August 2020



Highlights:

- In the host community, five of ten households (HHs) are dependent on external food assistance
- Nearly three of ten households still had no access to the markets despite easing of movement restrictions. Close to half of the households in the host community were not involved in any livelihood generating activities.
- Food consumption improved for both refugees and host populations, about eight out of ten households, for both populations, had an acceptable food consumption score
- 61 percent of the households in the refugee community and 67 percent of the households in the host community were relying on less preferred and less expensive food. Moreover, 28 percent and 21 percent HHs from host and refugee community were restricting food consumption by adults for small children to eat.
- Per capita weekly food expenditure for the host community households reduced by 521 BDT (6.5\$) to about 900 BDT following the lockdown measures.
- 83 percent of households in host community and 72 percent households in the refugee community are overall satisfied with WFP's assistance.

Introduction

In order to continue tracking the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on refugee and host community households' food security and livelihoods, a second round of survey was undertaken in July 2020. Blanket food assistance continued in the camps as a critical life-saving activity, while a range of other skills development and volunteering activities had to be suspended in order to abide by the movement restrictions and to ensure compliance with other health and safety measures by the government. In the host community, conversely, owing to loss of income opportunities and emerging needs of people WFP ramped up its assistance to over 500,000 (half a million) extremely vulnerable individuals. The targeted households were provided with essential in-kind and monetary support which were of high importance during such tiring times. The survey is the next iteration of the assessment conducted in May 2020. The focus was largely to assess the household level situation of food security, market access and impact on livelihoods of people. In addition, focus was also given to level of awareness about COVID-19 and related concerns. WFP is aiming to continue this survey in a quarterly basis to track the food security and livelihood status of the targeted population.

Methodology

The survey was undertaken by WFP Field Monitors through phone surveys in July. A representative sample of 308 refugee households spread across 13 camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf and 301 Bangladeshi (Host Community) households in Ukhiya were surveyed. The respondents were selected from the sample list of households interviewed during the first round in May 2020. As in the previous survey, the sample for the Bangladeshi households was mainly drawn from beneficiaries of WFP's Enhancing Food Security and Nutrition (EFSN/Livelihoods) project, which comprised of only women beneficiaries and could introduce some element of bias. Of the sampled refugee households, 77 percent were receiving assistance through the electronic vouchers¹ (e-Voucher), while 23 percent were on the in-kind modality of food assistance. One of the limitations of this assessment was collecting data by calling beneficiaries over the phone, but that was the safest medium to be followed during the coronavirus outbreak. EFSN beneficiaries

¹ Currently WFP is covering 94% of the refugee beneficiaries through electronic voucher system



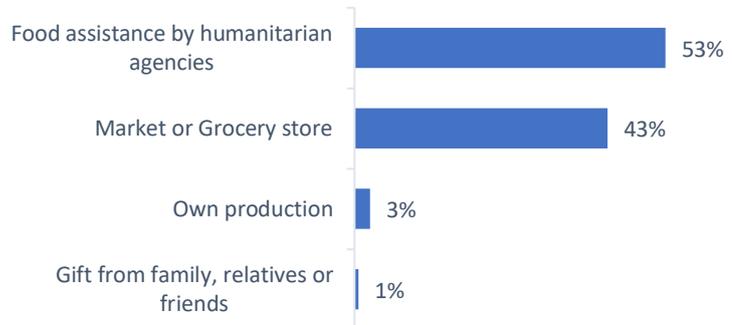
are selected as respondents due to their contact number availability which could also bias some of the results.

Findings

Food sources and stock levels

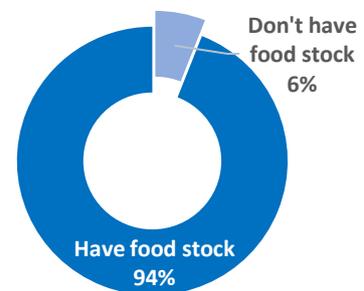
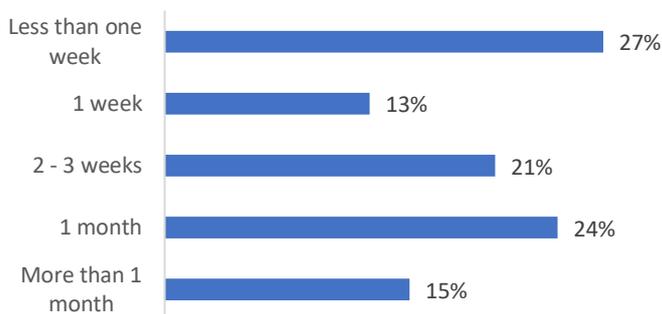
This study revealed that the host community households were primarily dependent on external food assistance by different humanitarian agencies, at the height of the Covid-19 crisis 43 percent of them were dependant on purchase of food from local markets. Only 3 percent of them had their own produced yields to consume.

Major sources of food for Host



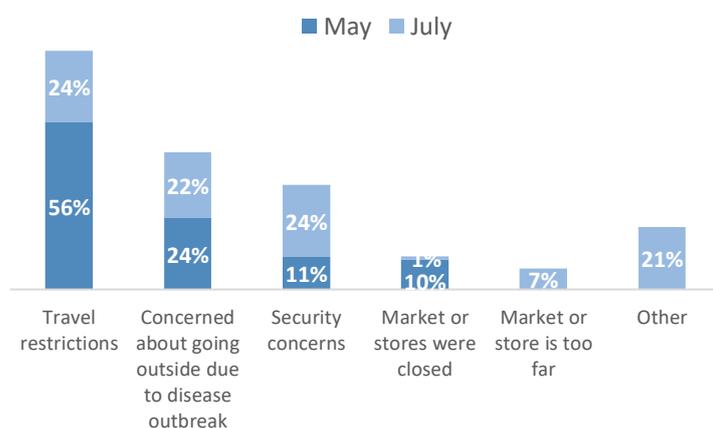
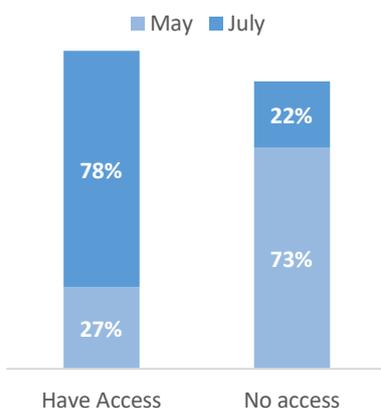
Majority of host community households had food stocks, at the time of the survey, though the quantity was relatively less. Further, the duration for which the available food stock would last has considerably reduced. 27 percent of the respondents said the food stock would last less than one week while during last round survey it was 54 percent HHs with same food stock. Overall 60 percent households anticipated running out of food stocks in less than a month from the time of the survey.

Duration of the food stock for Host



Households' access to the market in past seven days

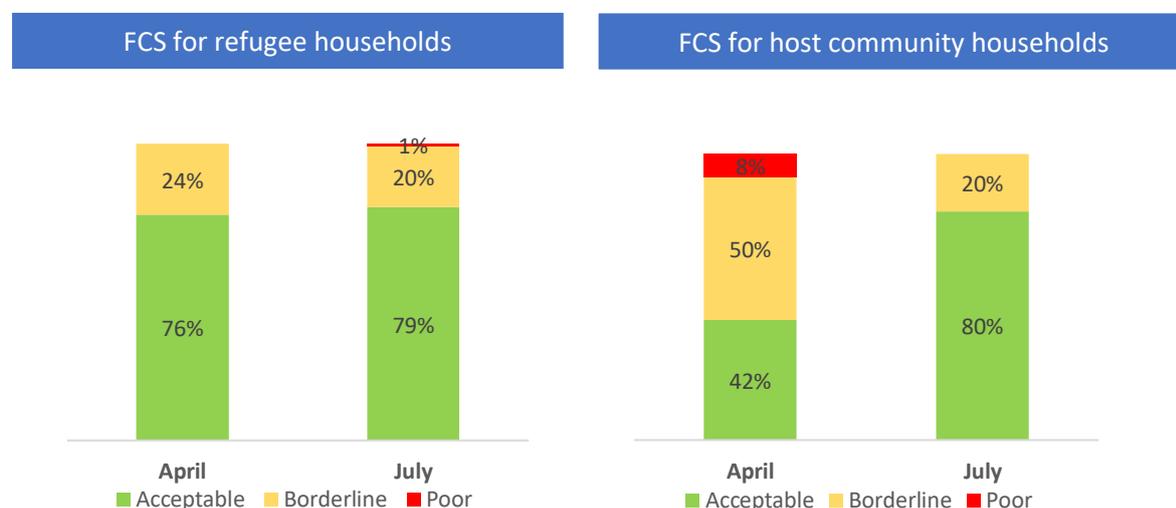
Reasons for not accessing the market in past 7 days



Considering improvement in the security situation and gradual easing of the travel restrictions, there has been considerable improvement in market access, compared to May. For those still facing challenges accessing the markets, major reasons advanced were fears on Covid-19 and security concerns.

Household food consumption

Food consumption outcomes have improved for both refugee and host communities. For the host population, the proportion of households with acceptable food consumption score (FCS) rose to 79 percent in July, compared to 42% percent in April². This could be attributed to the expanded humanitarian assistance, as noted earlier where assistance was the main source of food. The scale-up of assistance played a critical role in cushioning households following livelihood disruptions. Uninterrupted universal assistance for the refugee population also continue to support positive consumption outcomes, with 79 percent having acceptable FCS, compared to 76 percent in April.



Coping strategies

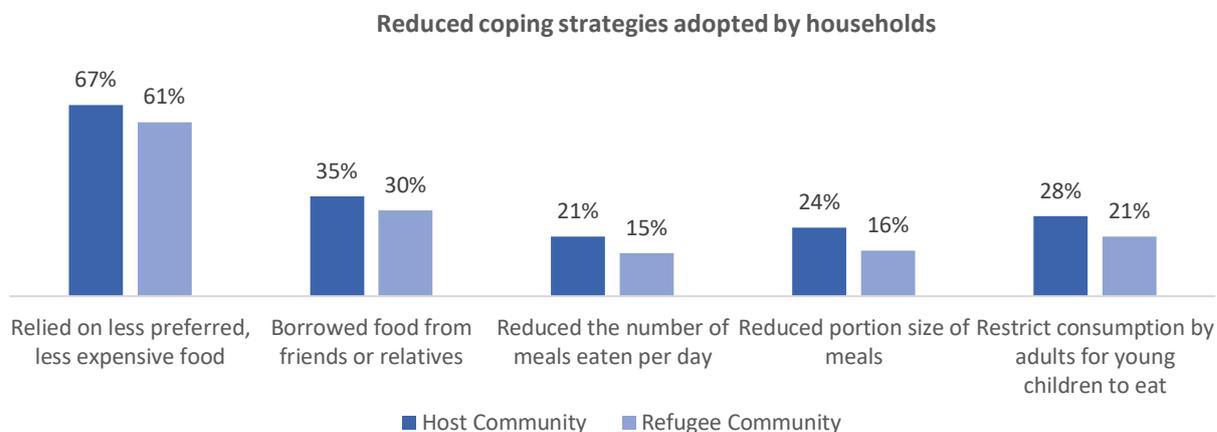
Owing to the lockdown imposed due to COVID-19, the households in the host and refugee communities faced enormous difficulties in supporting their daily subsistence. As a result, they resorted to various coping strategies to support their consumption needs. From the survey, the reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) score for refugee community was 5.32 and 6.46 for host community. Six out of ten refugee households relied on less preferred and less expensive foods to deal with the food shortages. Both the host and refugee communities moreover adopted similar coping strategies.

On the other hand, almost seven of ten host community households relied on less preferred food, a higher proportion compared to pre-COVID period: REVA 2019 had reported that four of ten host community households adopted consumption based coping strategies. Clearly, the host communities had to face more difficulties to access foods during the crisis. Borrowing food from friends or relatives was the second most common strategy adopted by both refugee and host community households. For refugee households, the proportion borrowing food was much lower

² In the 1st round impact assessment, data was collected during April. Mentioning the month of data collection may avoid misunderstanding in terms of contrasting the FCS scores.

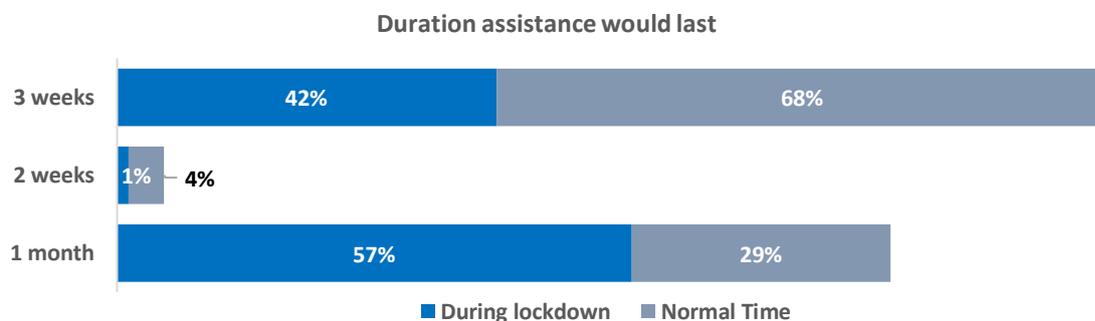
than pre-COVID period (30 percent vs. 42 percent in December), implying reduced availability at household level to support sharing/borrowing.

28 percent households in host communities and 21 percent households in refugee communities had to restrict the consumption of the elderly members of the household for ensuring three times meal for the young children.



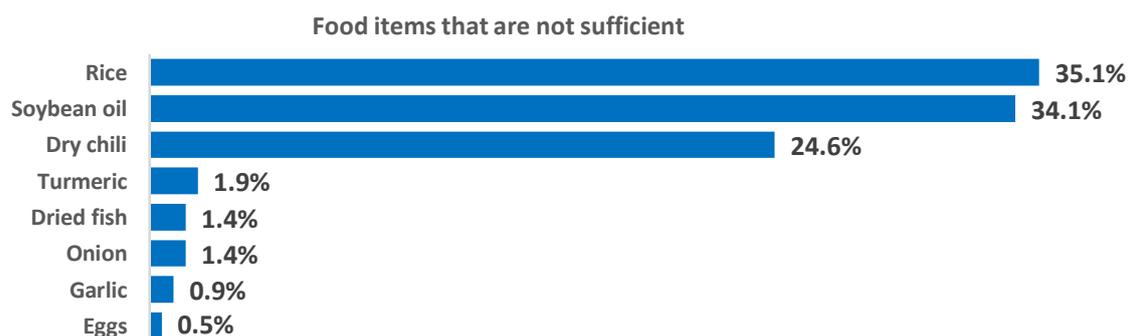
Food assistance and food expenditure

Amongst the e-voucher beneficiaries, around seven out of ten households indicated that their food stocks would last for about three weeks prior to the pandemic. However, only 26 percent of households now indicated that their food stocks would last up to three weeks. On the other hand, relatively higher proportion of the households (57 percent) had improved the stock levels as compared to the early days of the lockdown – where only 29 percent had stock levels that would



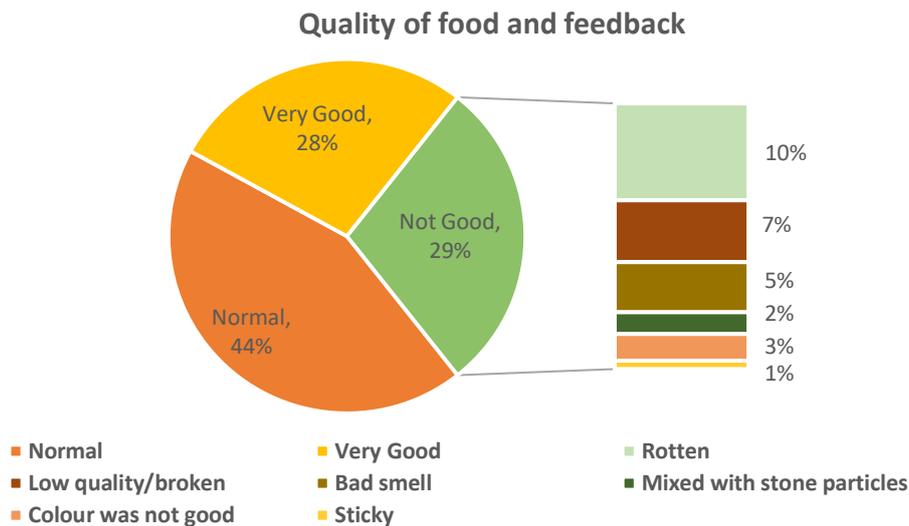
last for 1 month.

For respondents receiving e-voucher entitlements, about 90 percent of those interviewed noted that the quantity of the basic food items provided was not adequate to meet their demands, largely due to the fact that demand for the food items vary among the households. For some, the

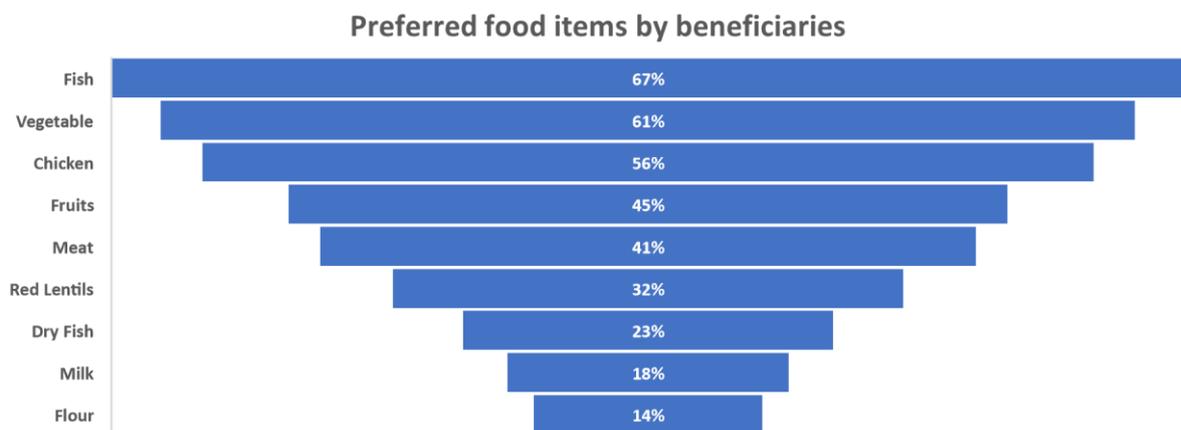


very basic food items like rice, oil etc were most preferred while for others' preference was mainly on food items like dried fish, eggs and spices, which seemed insufficient in the basket.

Findings showed that almost half of the respondents found the food quality to be normal while 28 percent of beneficiaries reported that food quality was very good, with a further 29 percent indicating that the food quality was not good enough. Major issues around food quality were: bad smell, mixed with stone particles, low quality/broken and for some items colour was not good.

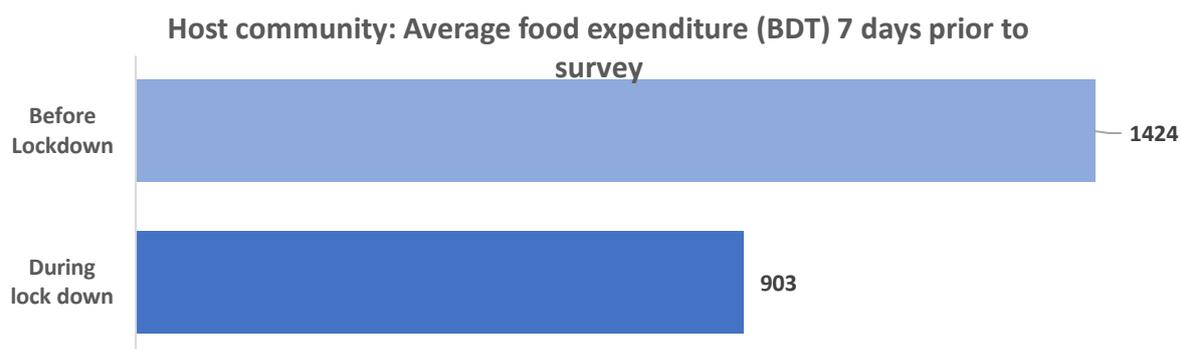


Most of the e-voucher beneficiaries preferred to add fish and vegetables to the food basket (67 and 61 percent respectively). Furthermore, 56 percent of the respondents preferred chicken, 45 percent fruits and 41 percent wanted meat.



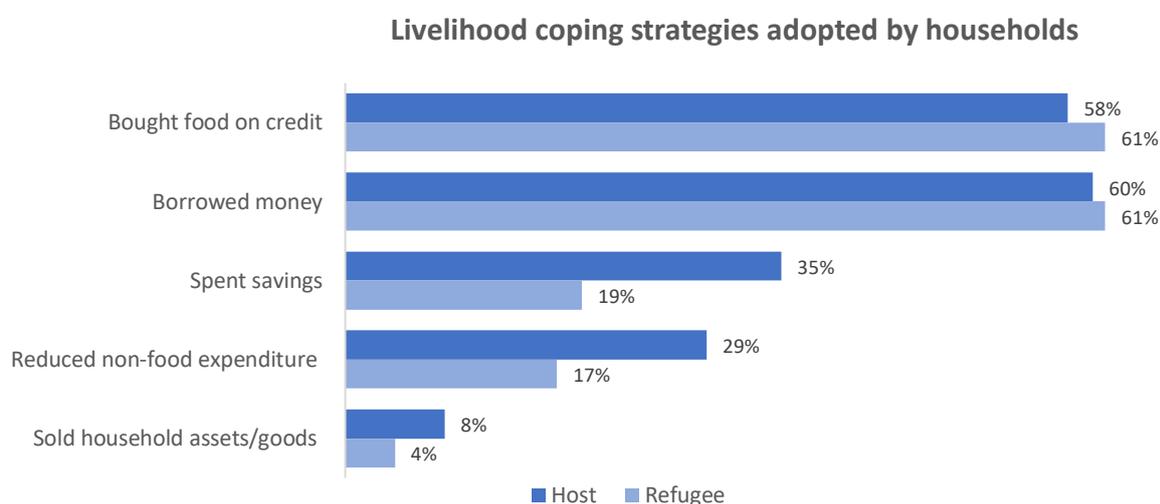
The overall expenditure on food for the last seven days prior to the survey had reduced significantly compared to pre-COVID-19 period. For the host communities, the average expenditure was 1423 BDT before lockdown, which reduced to about 903 BDT during lockdown, indicating a reduction of 520 BDT per capita food expenditure after lockdown imposed.





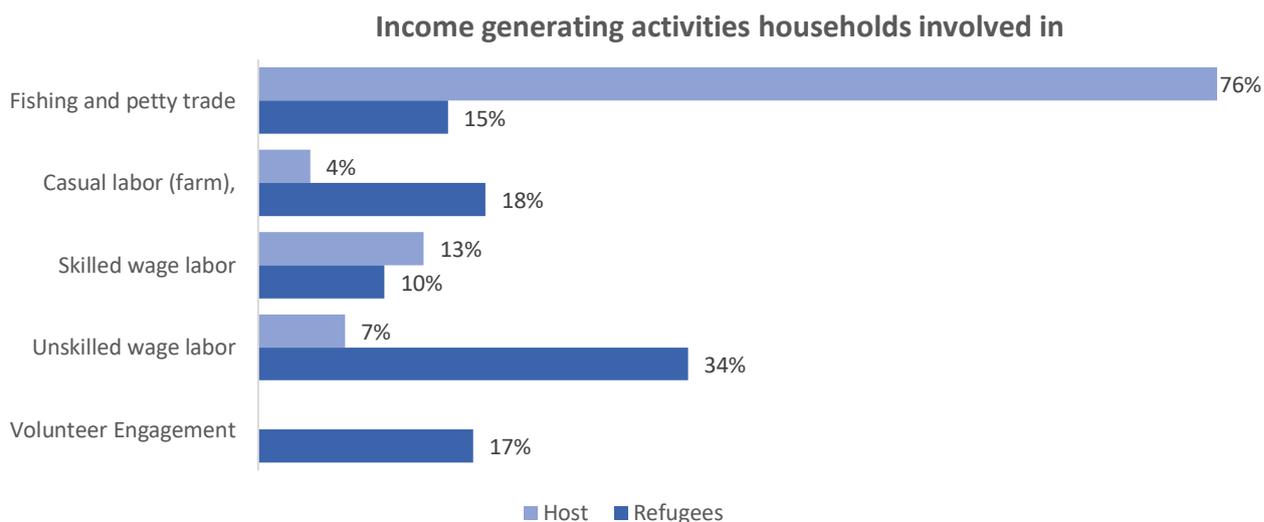
Livelihood status of the host population and refugees

For both the refugee and host communities, the most frequently used livelihoods coping strategies were borrowing money to buy food and buying food on credit. Reduced non-food expenditure and spending savings were also relatively common among the host community than the refugee community.³



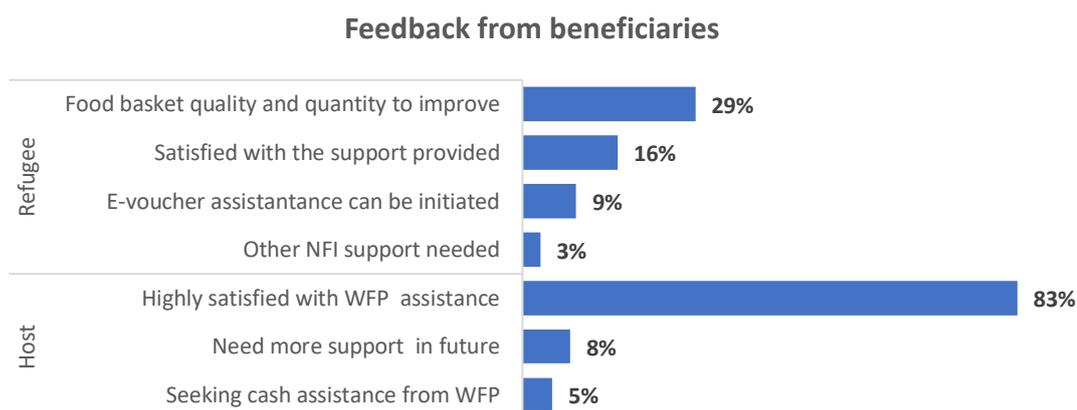
Moreover, respondents were asked about their involvement in income generating activities (IGAs) in the last 30 days after the lockdown. 50 percent and 54 percent of refugee and host community households respectively indicated they had been involved in some form of income generating activities in the past 30 days prior to the survey. On an average, host community households earned 3635 BDT in the 30 days prior to the survey, compared to 2904 BDT for refugee households. In host community majority of respondents were mainly in fishing and petty trade as their IGAs whereas unskilled wage labour was the main source of income among refugee community.

³ Assets are limited in case of Refugee HHs hence the selling tendency is similarly lower



Feedback for WFP

Respondents from the refugee communities had specific feedbacks for WFP, mostly related to quality and quantity of the food basket (by e-voucher beneficiaries). For those on in-kind assistance, they were mainly keen to be enrolled into the e-voucher modality which they perceived



to have more benefits. Additionally, they suggested an increase in the quantity and quality of the food items provided through the food basket. A few households demanded some other kind of assistance apart from the food assistance such as, access to liquified petroleum gas, equipment for house repairing and more income generating activities. On the other hand, 83 percent of the beneficiaries from the host community expressed satisfaction with WFP assistance.

Recommendations

- The survey reasserted the significance of the e-voucher scale up and emphasis on the quantity of food served, which beneficiaries noted was relatively reduced.
- Need for increased livelihood generation activities for both the refugee and host community as they recover from the economic crisis brought about by the health crisis.
- Considering the loss of income and livelihoods of the host community the need to continue providing humanitarian assistance to the population remains high.

For More Information Please Contact

Geophrey Sikei (Head of MEAL)

geophrey.sikei@wfp.org

Humayun Rashid (Senior M&E
Associate)

humayun.rashid@wfp.org