



FIRE RESPONSE 2023

Lessons Learned Report



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Lessons Learned on Fire Response 2023

Background

The population movement crisis that unfolded in 2017 resulted in the displacement of people from Rakhine, Myanmar, who crossed the border into Bangladesh. The situation currently continues as a protracted crisis because of the colossal number of displaced people – 963,038 people¹ – who are completely reliant on humanitarian assistance to meet their everyday needs amidst a backdrop of uncertainty on their future, including the possibility of repatriation, frequent disasters such as cyclone and fire incidents and increased security concerns in the camp.

The situation of the displaced people has been often compounded by natural disasters and multi-hazards including cyclone, flood, fire etc. A fire incident broke out on 5 March 2023 that affected approximately 15,926 people of 3,011 families and caused significant damage to BDRCS facilities, such as 980 water and sanitation facilities including three water network system supported by IFRC, 2,667 shelters including 1,000 newly built shelters supported by IFRC and a Primary Healthcare Centre (PHC) supported by Swiss Red Cross. As part of the immediate response, a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) operation of CHF 500,000 was launched. The emergency support, BDRCS with support from IFRC, provided 3,082 households with dry food, non-food items (NFI), shelter, WASH, protection and community engagement as follows:

- **1,994 households received supplementary dry food packages** containing 20 slices of bread, 1 kg puff rice, 500 gm molasses, 80 gm biscuit and 1 kg peanut.
- **2,632 households received NFI kits** comprising mosquito net, plastic mat and blanket with one time replenishment.
- **2,672 households received emergency shelter kits**, each contains bamboo (muli), ropes (3mm and 6mm) and tarpaulins, while 1,850 households were provided with mid-term shelter as part of long-term recovery support.
- **15,412 people** living in two blocks of Camp 11 were provided with **emergency water supplies** through urgent repairing of 63 tap stands. In the recovery phase following water restoration support was provided
 - **Fuel supply** for 3 damaged water supply system.
 - **12 tanks** were installed to replace the damaged ones.
 - **3 solar systems** were installed.
 - 3 generators were purchased (Capacity: two with 18 kVA, one with 10 kVA).
 - **3 chlorine closing pumps** were replaced.
 - **2 sets of submersible pumps** were purchased and installed for temporary water supply.
 - **127 plumbing materials** were supplied.
- As part of protection and community engagement, 12 staff and community volunteers were deployed to operate two help desks, one info-hub and visit households to disseminate information on ongoing emergency assistance. In this process, 376 pieces of feedback were captured from the affected households. The feedback was acted upon in coordination with site management on the spot. Requirement of necessary support (i.e., installation of shelter, carrying NFI kits) for EVI were communicated with shelter and WASH team. Five children were identified and referred to a team to support restoring family links.

¹ Figure referenced in the [Govt of Bangladesh-UNHCR population factsheet issued 31 August 2023](#), and includes displaced people relocated from Cox's Bazar to Bhashan Char Island. Note that the camp population figures are updated periodically.

To ensure reflection from the fire response operation, a lesson learning exercise aimed at capturing key insights from the target people as well as internal and external stakeholders involved in the response for collective learning to be used in future response programming of similar nature. The following sections detailed out the exercise. Specific objective of this lesson learning exercise is to:

- systematically analyse the fire response outcome and the relevant activities as well as distribution conducted in Camp 11 and identify strengths and areas for improvement and develop actionable recommendations to improve future fire response operations in similar context.
- widely share lessons learnt with internal (RCRC) and external (RRRC, site management agency, ISCG etc.)
- capture learning from the assessment, implementation, and monitoring of DREF operation and how this built into the professional development of BDRCS staff and volunteers.
- capture how the project interventions reduced the disaster impact of the vulnerable households and any specific anecdote to community resilience building.
- capture what are the takeaway for building knowledge and skills on emergency response capacity of EOC, Search and rescue and incident command.
- capture how the operation demonstrated collaboration with various stakeholders and effective communication approaches.
- analyse and feed forward for any long-term recovery needs in the community.
- capture how the community engagement was driven with cultural sensitivity and meeting the specific needs.

Introduction

The report is to highlight the findings from various source of information regarding the fire response. The following sections comprise methodology to describe the ways to capture perceptions from various stakeholders, limitations and challenges to explain about the real scenario on the ground while collecting the data, analysis to interpretation of various source of data and conclusion with recommendation to draw a summary result of the fire response with actionable recommendations for future reference of similar type of response in the camp context.

Methodology

A participatory approach, engaging key stakeholders involved in the fire response operation was deployed. The following methodologies have been used to capture lessons and develop actionable recommendation:

- a. *Key Informant Interview (KII)*: At least 4 external respondents, such as Majhis (leaders of camp community), Camp in Charge (CiC), Site Management Agency in Camp 11 were interviewed deploying a semi-structured questionnaire– to be developed in the planning phase.
- b. *Focus Group Discussion (FGD)*: 6 FGDs were conducted selecting participants from the fire affected camps with a range of 8 – 12 mixed adults (male, female, adolescent, disabled people, elderly, transgender), not more than 1 FGD from a sub-block. The FGD sessions were conducted deploying a semi-structured questionnaire.
- c. *2 household surveys*: Statistically accepted samples of recipient households’ representatives, who were provided with shelter, NFI and WASH etc. support, were approached to capture their perceptions about the selection, distribution, community engagement, construction, and quality of the items and

water supply. 2 sets of structured questionnaires under WASH and Shelter were developed during the planning phase.

- d. *Lesson learnt workshop and sharing session:* A Day long lesson learnt workshop was conducted with 30 participants comprising BDRCS and IFRC staff and 7 external stakeholders who were involved in the response as well as 5 facilitators, and 2 BDRCS and IFRC key senior management personnel. In the workshop key findings from KIIs, FGDs and surveys were presented – which provoked the participants discussion reflecting fire response. The discussion was followed by a group activity focusing strengths, area of improvements and recommendation for emergency response, shelter and NFI and WASH. Then a plenary session was conducted where group work outcomes was presented.
- e. *Process of data collection and analysis:* A team of 8 staff from CEA, PGI and PMER units were involved in the questionnaire development, conducting FGDs and KII sessions. In this process shelter and WASH team supported in identifying criteria and questions against the criteria. 20 RCY volunteers supported by 2 NDRT team members were deployed to collect data from household surveys. The data collectors were trained prior to the survey. In addition to that, a planning workshop at the beginning and a data analysis workshop were conducted with responsible team members to develop a realistic data collection plan with survey questionnaires and guide question for FGD/KII as well as data transcription, compilation and analysis on the analytical framework.

Limitation and challenges

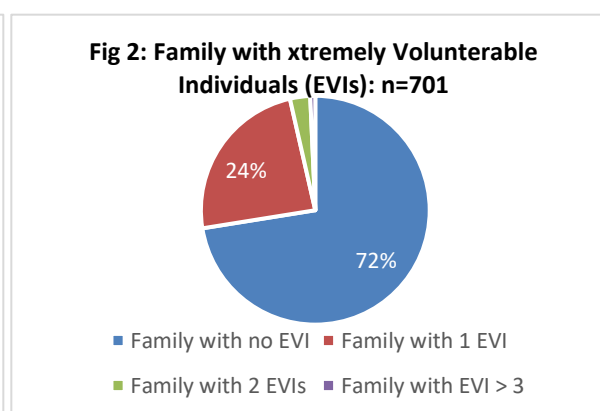
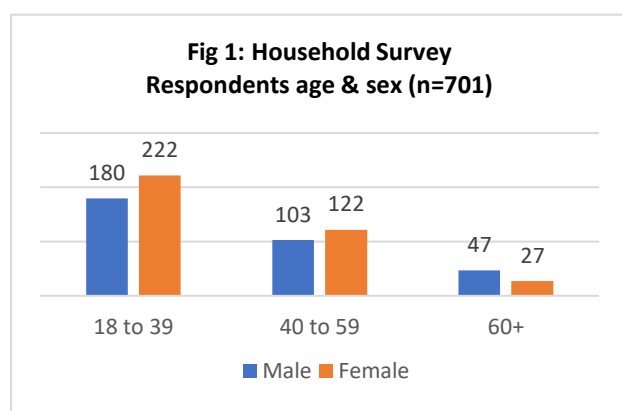
Number of limitation and challenges faced before, during and after the data collection period, as elaborated below:

1. **Frequent postponement or re-scheduling of activities** was encountered in the lessons learnt exercise due to other unavoidable priorities and engagements from all identified participants which had caused further adjustment to its completion timeline.
2. Sector focal points especially those **directly involved in the emergency phase of the response were not included in the initial process of the lessons learnt exercise** based on its original plan. However, they have still been involved and engaged in the lesson learned workshop together with their external counterparts.
3. **Inadequate availability of female interviewers (FGD facilitators) which** resulted to relatively low engagement of female respondents from the beneficiary households at the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). In addressing this factor, wherever possible, female volunteers were involved, and male counterparts were kept away.

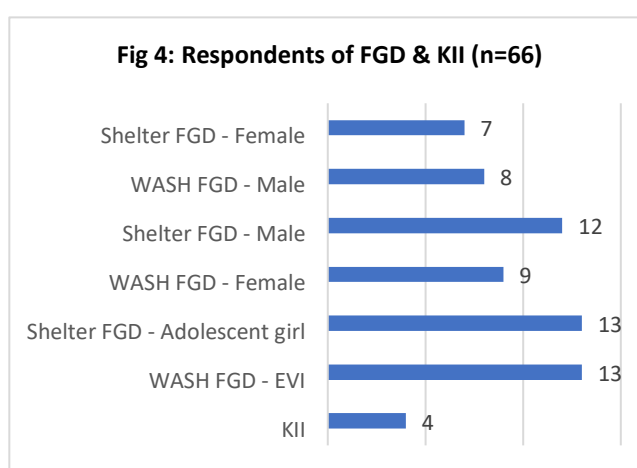
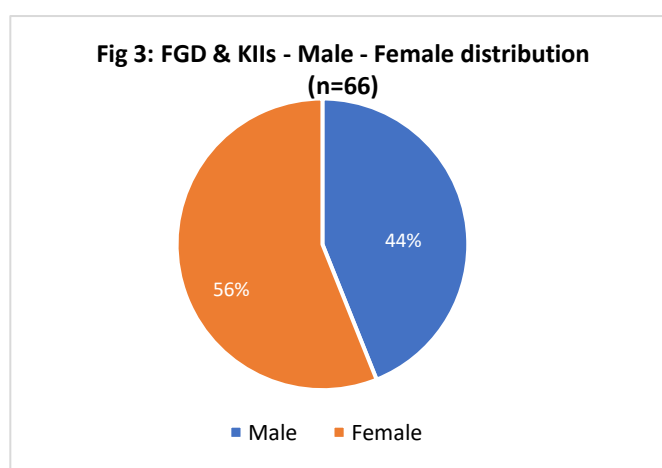
Lessons Learned from key findings (data analysis)

Demographic information

The household survey reached 701 respondents in fire affected blocks of Camp 11, each represented his/her family, with attributes of gender, age group variation and extreme vulnerability in both shelter and WASH response (*fig:1*). Among them 351 respondents reported shelters and other 350 respondents about WASH facility. Female respondents (53%) were more than the male respondent while respondents in 18 to 39 age group were more (57%) than the total of other two age groups. Important to note that **24% household (168) have reported that they have at least one family members who have various vulnerable conditions such as disabilities, elderly, pregnancy, long term illness etc – were at highest risk** (*fig:2*).



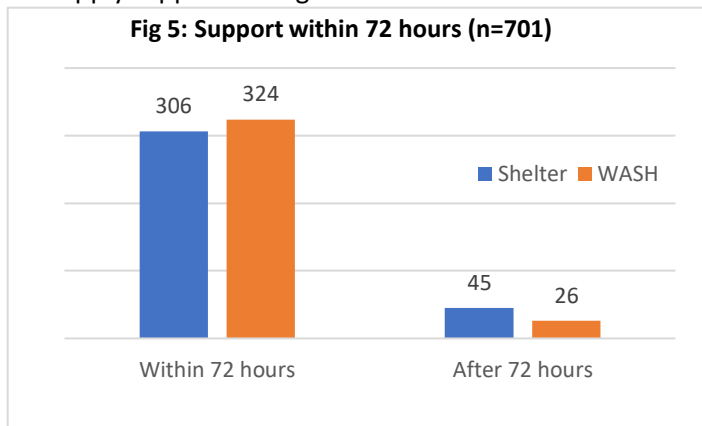
6 Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and 4 Key Informant Interview (KIIs) respondents also covered balanced gender distribution (*fig: 2*) and variation of respondents' characteristics comprising groups of male, female, adolescent girls, and extremely vulnerable individuals (EVIs).



Emergency response within 72 hours of fire incident

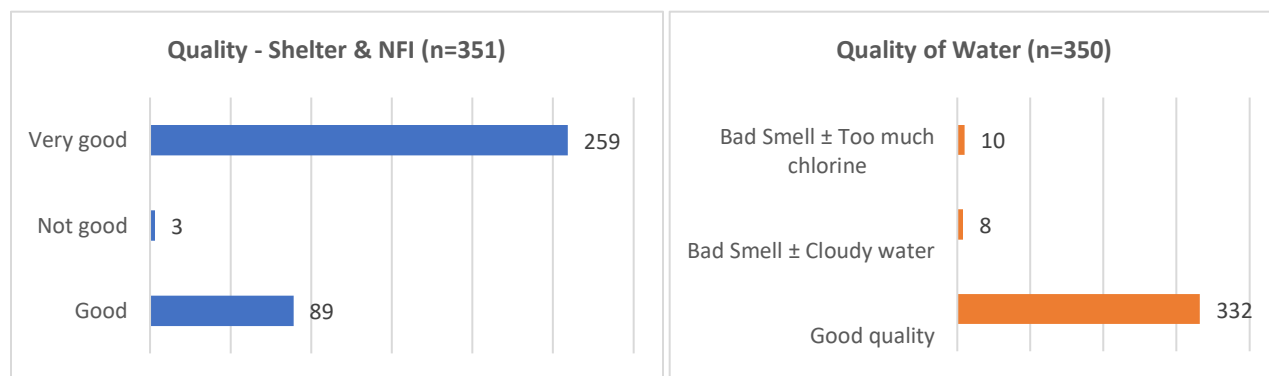
As part of shelter and NFI emergency support, 335 shelter respondents reported that they were given set of bamboos, rope and tarpaulin and 320 households mentioned that they received mosquito net, plastic mat, blanket as non-food items (NFI). Apart from shelter materials and NFI, some of them mentioned that they received cooker, bucket, pitcher, CNG gas cylinder and other household items. Under WASH

emergency response, it was reported that IFRC Emergency Response Unit (ERU) tools were used to quickly restore water supply replacing generator and repairing damaged tap stands. However, 89% household respondents informed that the shelter and water supply support were given within 72 hours. Government officials and other actors acknowledged the overall response of BDRCS was timely. Though the response delay was reportedly not significant, it must be considered as an area of improvement. The workshop participants identified that there was **no provision of water trucking while long queue at the water tap stand** caused further suffering of the affected people, and **delay in volunteer mobilization with inadequate coordination and communication** at the beginning of the emergency response as main factors in quick response for emergency shelter materials distribution. In supporting the delay, the response team reported that there was no provision of food or water for staff and volunteers during distribution, and **they had to leave camp before 4 PM**.



Quality

Most household respondents acknowledged receipt of ‘very good’ to ‘good’ quality shelter materials, while a few households raised **issues on the ‘muli’ bamboo quality as raw and infested** by insects within one month. In terms of water restoration support, the respondents mostly thought the water quality was good, except a few mentioned otherwise including bad smell, mixture of too much chlorine, cloudy water. In this connection, the WASH technical staff in the workshop mentioned that at the beginning of water supply restoration slightly higher amount of chlorine was mixed to ensure water safety.

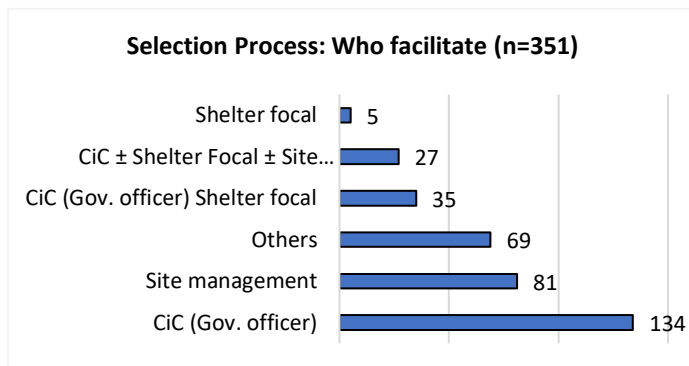


The shelter team and site development personnel reported that during recovery or reconstruction phase, in some cases the teams **couldn’t provide the shelter according to the standard size due to space constraints** and households often disagreed to leave space for side roads. However, they mentioned that post fire shelter construction was conducted managing space for side roads, drains, open space etc. which have been way better than the abrupt shelter construction during early years (2018 – 2019) of the camp settlement. One of the challenges encountered by the site development and BDRCS sector was **too many organizations got CiC approval for shelter and NFI support**. Later on, this was resolved through sector

coordination that determined organization wise allocation. But **a few organizations reportedly couldn't follow the standard quality of shelter size and NFIs**. CiC of the Camp 11 showed utmost satisfaction about BDRCS pace of work and quality of the support.

Selection process

One of the criteria was to get household reflection about the way they get selected. The household respondents mostly mentioned that **CiC and site management agencies were the key actors** who facilitated the selection process when they sought assistance for shelter and NFI. However, coordinated joint assessment was reportedly play a significant role in identifying households and facilities to be restored after

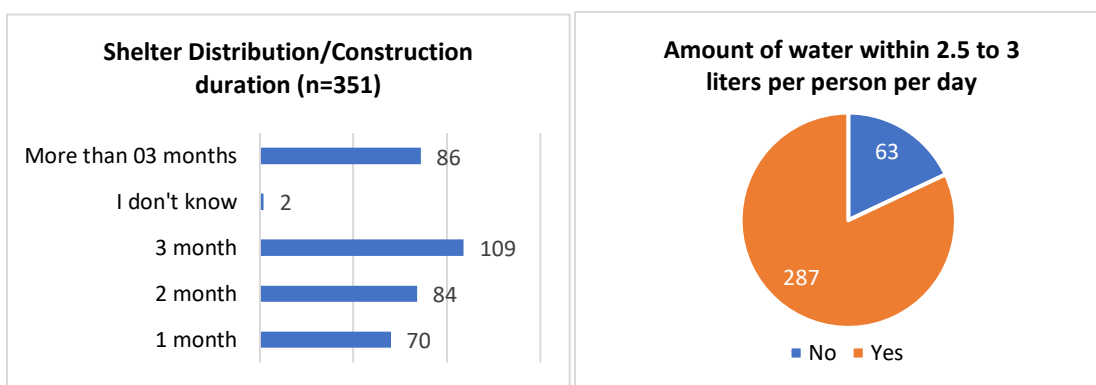


the fire incident. CiC and site management agencies acknowledged **BDRCS team's timely deployment at the coordination mechanism for this entire selection process**.

Distribution or Construction Process- Mid-term Shelter (MTS) and Water Supply

MTS support

It was reported that within the given six months of timeline, majority of the mid-term shelter (MTS) construction was completed by three to four months after the fire incident. While emergency shelter kits were reportedly ensured within 72 hours, the household respondents mentioned that they received MTS in 3 months and **a significant number of respondents received MTS beyond 3 months** from the fire incident. In-terms of construction time, mostly the MTS were finished within 10 days but a some reported that it took more than 10 days. Site management agency respondents mentioned that distribution process of MTS was satisfactory, though **crowd management often seemed beyond control**.

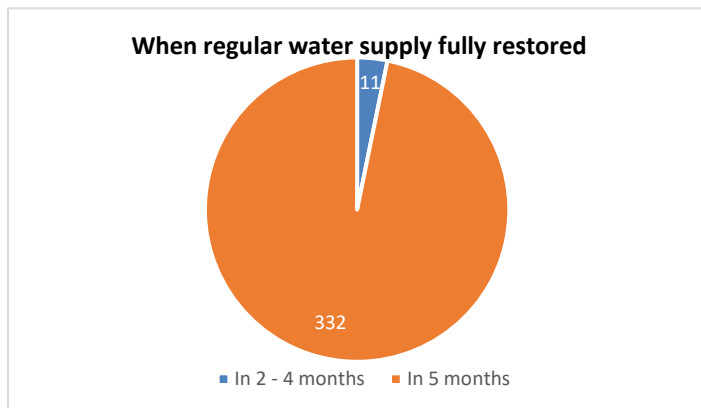


Provision of Safe and Potable Water Supply

Significant number of households reported that **the amount of water, they were able to consume, was less than 2.5 liters per person per day** which while majority of households said they had 2.5 to 3 liters per person per day. The WASH team mentioned that there was **no provision for water trucking at the time of emergency response period and as a result all affected subblocks were not covered within 24 hours**.

As such, uniformity of emergency water supply (2.5 - 3L/p/d) was not reportedly maintained. Household respondents pointed out distance and number of the functional water points as factors to collect water in long time and in long queue.

In the recovery phase, the water supply was reportedly restored in full pace within 5 months, as most household respondents mentioned so, while only a significant number of respondents mentioned in 2 – 4 months. In supporting this status, the WASH team acknowledged the time taken due to long procurement process.



Coordination

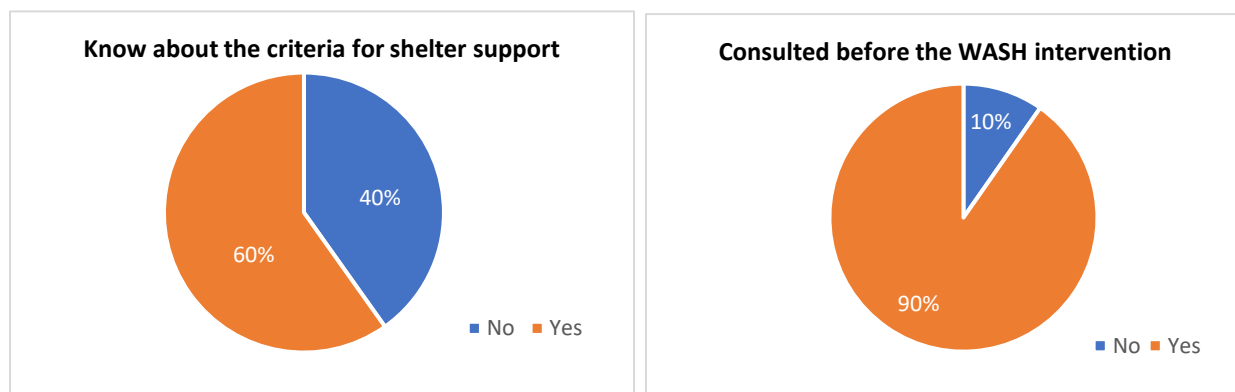
Overall coordination was reported in-time with government and site management. The Camp-in-Charge (CiC) highly appreciated the active presence of camp focal in all camp level coordination meeting. He also suggested that **BDRCS team can extend collaboration with new national/international organizations that are willing to support for the affected households**. WASH emergency response and long-term recovery support were suggested to have **intensive coordination with affected people and other agencies**. In this suggestion, WASH Team reported that the temporary tap stands were installed consulting with Majhee (camp community leader) and some household representatives. However, the restoration of water supply was reported as technically standard. The workshop participants identified the following **things to consider**:

- Emergency health and dry food support were mobilized through coordination.
- Waste management provision was not maintained through coordination with public service providers.
- Duplication was found in distribution of NFI and shelter kits due to lack of coordination.
- Site plan for the affected camp block was often delay due to the site management agency IOM. Shelter team coordinated to resolve this, as it caused delay in MTS support.
- Community consultation was undertaken and accordingly quick NFI and food support received.
- Some implementing organizations didn't follow sectors guideline for NFI through coordination and it created confusion about BDRCS support.
- There were too many actors appeared for shelter construction that led to confusion on who does what. But regular coordination with CiC and the sub-sectors these were clarified.

CiC of Camp 11, as KII respondent, mentioned that BDRCS camp officers had actively participated the CiC office coordination meeting during the emergency period. He appreciated overall coordination. **BDRCS shelter team reported that they were unaware of EOC instruction at the beginning and there was no provision of daily feedback with shelter team.**

Information Sharing

Majority of the respondents reported that they were aware about the shelter size and types and number of materials before construction at the recovery phase, though the support was given on basis of sector identified need. In contrast, a significant proportion of respondents (40%) reported that they did not know the criteria of shelter support. In terms of the source of information, most of the respondents reported that BDRCS community volunteers and Majhis were shared the information related to the support based



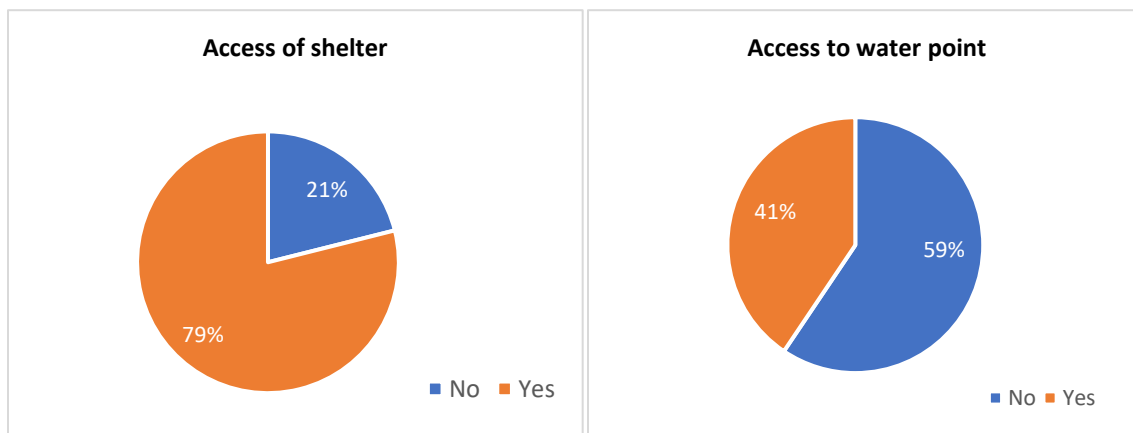
on the damage category (partial, major and full).

Before WASH facilities restoration, most households were reportedly consulted through BDRCS WASH community volunteers and the assigned staff. However, **some still mentioned that there was no consultation or information sharing prior to the intervention.** The communication channels identified by the households included household visit by community volunteers, community meeting and info-hub at distribution centre.

Safety and Accessibility in Recovery Phase

Recovery stage

Household respondents mentioned that **shelters and water points reconstructed in hilly slope area were**



not accessible for persons with disabilities, pregnant women and elderly people that required side development, such as stairs, ramps, grab rail to make it accessible. However, most households expressed that shelters and water points were located at safe and accessible place. BDRCS team reported that they considered and prioritized households with family members who were persons with disabilities and extremely vulnerable individuals to get priority in receiving the MTS support with porter.

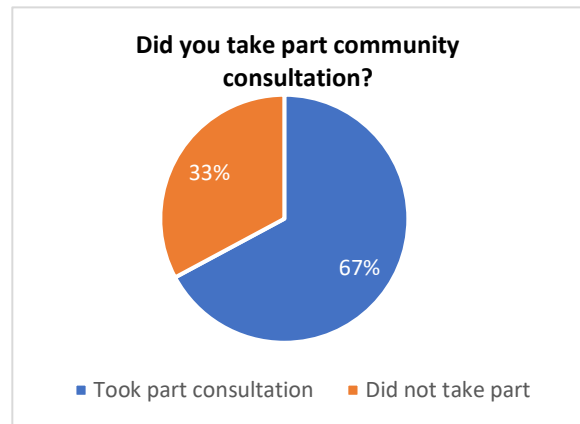
Emergency stage

The temporary tap stands during emergency phase were reportedly built on plain land for better accessibility.

Community Engagement

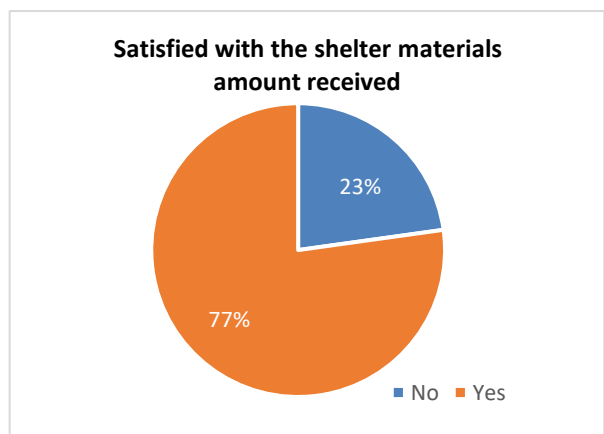
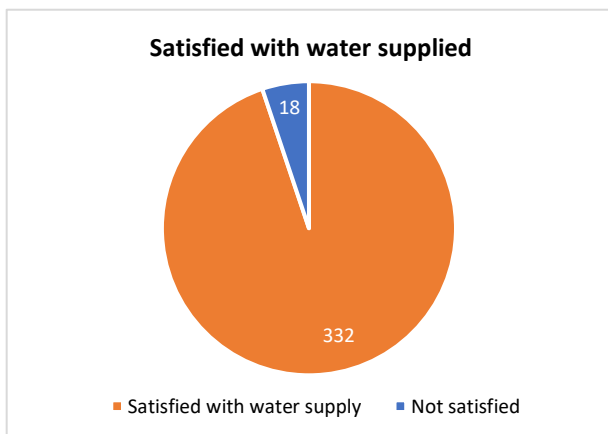
Discussion with the household respondents revealed that some community consultations with community leaders (Majhi, imam, influential person) were conducted before providing shelter support. However, they mentioned that **female and adolescent girls were not included in any consultation before providing emergency support**. Staff generally consulted with household representative or majhis, selected random basis. Majority of households have reportedly access to share information with BDRCS volunteers, CiC, Majhi and info-hub. However, it is reported that before **installation of water supply system there was need for community consultation with diverse group of people such as women, persons with disabilities, elderly etc**. They mentioned that some of their feedback were solved immediately and some still remain unsolved. At the workshop, **CEA – PGI team shared their critical observation as follows:**

- First aid support was delayed.
- Obtaining approval from CiC on EVI assessment was delayed.
- Emergency support for the person with disability and pregnant women were not considered due to lack of data.
- Lack of cooperation and communication with protection actors.



Satisfaction of the fire affected households

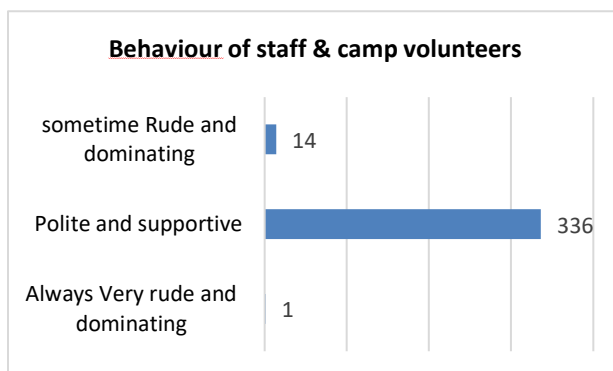
Most of the Households expressed satisfaction of emergency shelter support. **However, some still reported that amount of shelter materials was insufficient**. Household mostly showed utmost gratefulness for receiving emergency shelter support which saved them from rain, extreme hot weather as well as slept well which helped to overcome the tragedy. Similarly, though there were some critical feedback about water supply, community people mostly expressed satisfaction having restoration of safe



drinking water at emergency and recovery phases. However, some of the households said that **block wise support for tap stand were insufficient during emergency period.**

Staff and volunteers' behaviour

Most households stated that the staff and camp volunteers' behavior was very good, polite, and supportive. Though insignificant, some households' reflection was just opposite – as they mentioned that staff and volunteer deployed in the distribution **behaved sometimes rudely and showed domination.**



Additional needs

The household respondents participated survey and focused group discussion expressed the following additional needs alongside their reflection on the targeted fire response:

- Solar fan, Battery, person wise blanket, mat, soap, hygiene kits and assistive device for person with disabilities and elderly people were needed after the fire incidents.
- Increase security night guards at night for the safety and security of camp people.
- Each block requires three water point.
- Water drum is required for each household to store enough drinking water.
- Community people requested for porter service during the distribution.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall fire response of BDRCS with the support from IFRC along with the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners has been accomplished with utmost satisfaction based on the reflection from different stakeholders including the fire affected household respondents and personnel from the external agencies such as CiC and IoM and internally from BDRCS and IFRC teams. **The timely coordination with multi-stakeholders at camp level; efficient emergency response with distribution of shelter kits, food and water supply delivered within 72 hours from the incident and coordinated MTS and restoration of water supply system based on the needs of fire affected households at the recovery phase are the best practices captured - which will be worth continuing for future response.**

Major areas for further improvement include, among other, establishing multi-sectoral response team to lead coordination and communication mechanism for emergency response within 72 hours through the EOC, efficiency of construction within the standard timeline, finding alternatives way of potable water supplies at the emergency period, such as water trucking, include persons with disabilities, Extremely Vulnerable Individuals (EVIs), female and adolescent girls in the community consultation before the recovery support, and ensure staff and volunteers approach towards affected people with utmost respect and dignity. With the existing capacity and available resources, it is thought that BDRCS will continue to respond to unexpected multi-hazards such as fire, cyclone, landslides etc. In this regard, the lessons learned will contribute to further improve the response capacity of BDRCS.

Following table shows critical lessons learned on specific areas and recommendations.

No.	Areas	Critical Lessons	Recommendations
1	Overall emergency response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in volunteer/staff mobilization in distribution point for emergency shelter kits. • No provision of alternative emergency potable water supplies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Ensure a multi-sectoral response team at the outset of disaster with specified communication and coordination procedures. 1.2. Revise/review the volunteers mobilization guideline. 1.3. Alternative support, such as water trucking can be provided while the emergency repair is undergone. 1.4. Have provision of hardship allowance for staff and volunteers deployed at the emergency period. 1.5. Training on fire awareness and ensure fire equipment to firefight and prevention.
2.	Quality of materials and items provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were some issues raised on the 'muli' bamboos distributed and water quality at emergency phase. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Strengthen the quality verification prior to distribution. 2.2. Improve understanding of standard quality and agreed layout/design. 2.3. Have provision of emergency water quality test.
3.	Distribution or Construction Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents raised mid-term shelter constructed beyond 3 months. • Often uncontrolled crowd at the distribution points. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Monitor every step and if there is unexpected delay, communicate with beneficiaries, CiC and others. 3.2. Improve crowd management increasing delivery channels if needed.
4.	Information sharing and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some reported that there was no consultation or information sharing prior to the intervention. • The consultation did not include people with disabilities, females, elderly etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1. Ensure block wise community consultation and information sharing where all types of vulnerable people are included. 4.2. Identify list of extremely vulnerable individuals (EVIs) during the joint assessment phase.
5.	Safety and Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some water points and shelters are reported non-accessible for EVIs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Review the support provision as inclusive as possible within the available budget limit.
6.	Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents demanded more amount of shelter materials, food parcels, tap stands in block wise, and other household materials. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1. Assess the support required at emergency and recovery phases in coordination with external.