Bhasan Char Sectoral Needs Assessment (BCNA)

Bhasan Char, Bangladesh | December 2024

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Access to livelihoods: **64%** of households reported having a source of income, reflecting a significant improvement from **34%** in 2023. Additionally, **57%** of households indicated they could afford more goods and services compared to the previous year. However, challenges such as limited access to capital, low demand, and restricted markets continue to hinder the sustainability and growth of income-generating activities.

Safety and security: **81%** of households reported no concerns about security on the island, while **94%** of youth stated they feel safe, indicating effective safety mechanisms in place. However, key safety challenges reported include privacy issues in public toilets and bathing areas, as well as unsafe streets and pathways, primarily due to inadequate lighting at night.

Access to education: **72%** of children are enrolled in school with barriers indicated by **28%** for non-enrolment including age-related constraints and child marriage.

Access to health: **41%** of individuals required healthcare in the previous three months, and **87%** were able to access it. Major reported barriers to healthcare include unavailable specific medicine, treatments or service and long waiting times.

Condition of sanitation facilities: **71%** of respondents reported feeling safe using communal latrines, while **29%**, particularly women, expressed concerns about safety. **62%** of the households with members with disabilities reported they have sufficient access to latrines.

Shelter and energy: **70%** of households report sufficient sleeping space without issues, up from **46%** in 2023. **98%** of households use LPG for cooking.

Protection and psychosocial support: **11%** of respondents reported experiencing psychological distress, however, this is a significant improvement from **59%** reported in 2023.

Satisfaction with humanitarian assistance: **96%** of households reported being satisfied with the assistance provided, including shelter, non-food items (such as hygiene kits), and site management. This marks an improvement from **91%** reported in 2023.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

2024 marked the seventh year of the Rohingya refugee crisis, after more than 700,000 Rohingya were forced to flee Myanmar's Rakhine State and found safety in Bangladesh. As of November 2024, a total of **1,006,670** refugees are registered in Bangladesh, with **36,376** residing on Bhasan Char and the remainder living in the overcrowded 33 camps in Cox's Bazar. Established by the Government of Bangladesh in 2020, Bhasan Char aims to alleviate overcrowding in these camps. The UN and humanitarian partners continue to provide critical assistance, including food, education and protection, and support the authorities in delivering other services.

The Bangladesh interim Government reiterated that the presence of FDMN/refugees is temporary and voluntary, with sustainable returns expected once conditions in Myanmar allow. However, ongoing conflict in Rakhine State and increasing funding gaps—only **64%** of the required funds were received in 2023—continue to pose challenges.

The 2024 Bhasan Char Needs Assessment (BCNA) builds on findings from 2023, analyzing healthcare, WASH, shelter, education, livelihoods, and protection. This analysis provides basis for the 2025 Joint Response Plan, ensuring targeted interventions to enhance refugee resilience and living conditions despite resource constraints. Additionally, the assessment includes cross-cutting themes such as Disability, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR), Youth, and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The BCNA 2024 surveyed **410** households (one respondent per household) across **62** clusters on Bhasan Char using a stratified random sampling method. The sample was stratified by the sex of household heads and the presence of persons with specific needs (PSNs), ensuring inclusivity and representation of vulnerable groups. The survey achieved a **95%** confidence level with a **5%** margin of error, providing reliable and actionable insights.

Data collection was conducted by **ACTED** between 1 and 9 October 2024, through primary interviews with adult household representatives and complemented by secondary data sources.

Data processing

Data analysis for the BCNA 2024 was conducted in accordance with the Data Analysis Plan (DAP), ensuring a structured and systematic approach to data processing and interpretation. The analysis primarily utilised R for robust data cleaning, validation, and interpretation, enabling the identification of key trends, correlations, and sectoral gaps. Quality control measures and validation checks were implemented to maintain the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

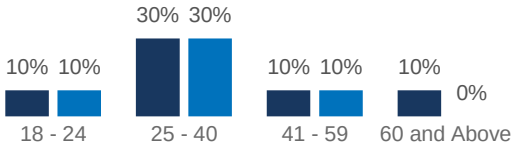
Additionally, secondary data sources were incorporated to complement the primary data collected during the survey, offering broader context and deeper insights into the results.

Please note that data presented here is from the BCNA household survey unless otherwise referenced.
For detailed, indicator-specific results per sector, please access the BCNA Analytical Dashboard HERE,

RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

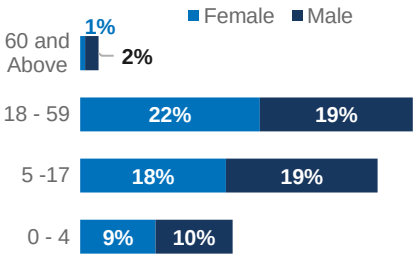
Households

50% Male | **50 %** Female

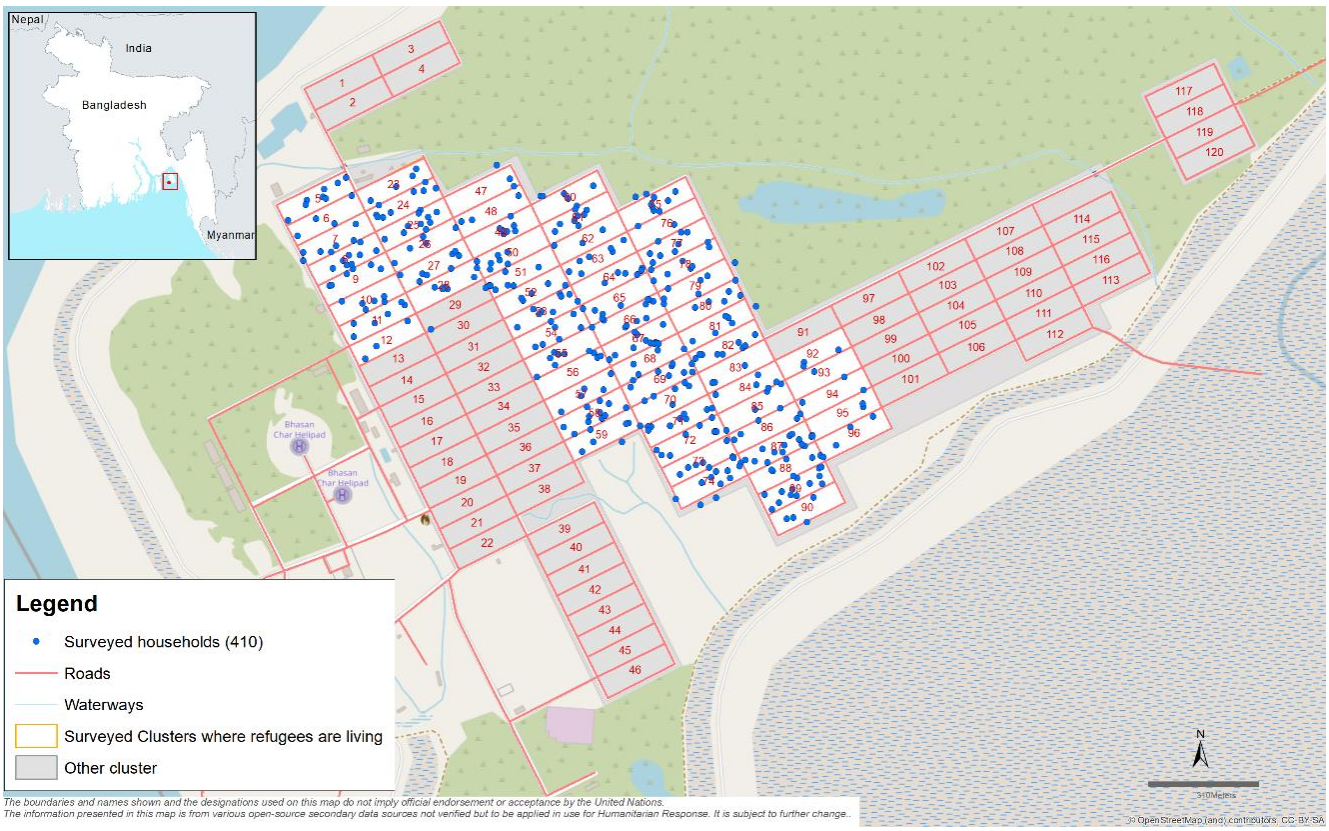


Members of households

- **18** – average age of individual members of the households surveyed
- **5** – average Household size



Map 1: Surveyed Households on Bhasan Char

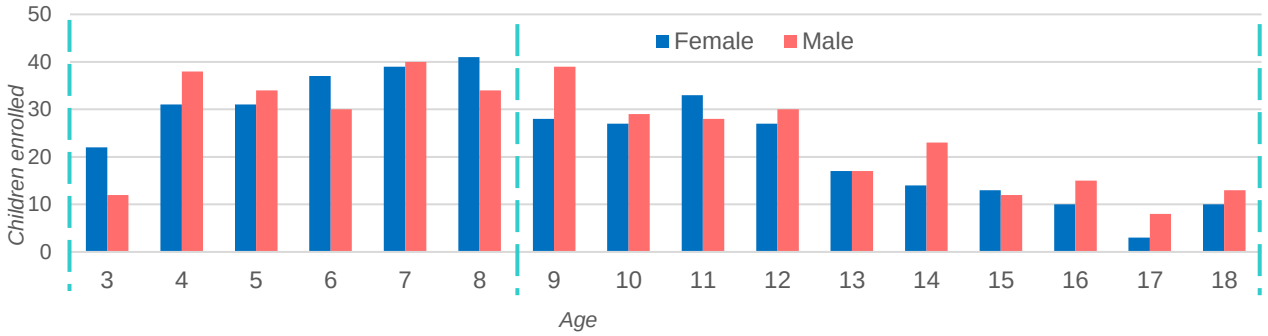


EDUCATION

72%
Enrolled

*Education on Bhasan Char remains a priority, with **72%** of children aged 3–18 enrolled in learning programmes. The majority of students follow the Myanmar Curriculum (75%), while others participate in Early Childhood Education Programme (20%) and adolescent learning programmes (5%). For the **28%** of school-aged children not attending school, barriers include age-related constraints, early marriage and responsibilities as child parents.*

Enrolment trend by ages 3-18



The enrolment rates increase for children aged between 3 to 7 years; however, enrolment begins to decline for children aged 9 to 18 years. Starting at 88% enrolment at age 9, the rate gradually reduces to 10% by age 18.

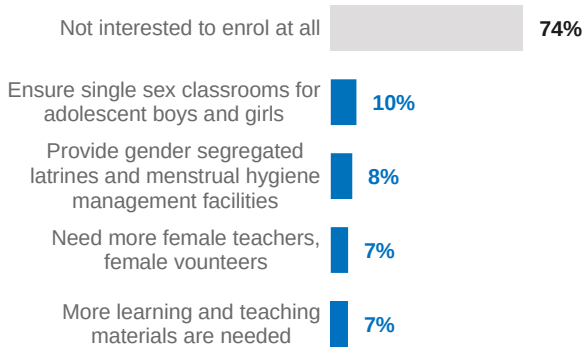
Among those enrolled, the majority (90%) demonstrated consistent attendance, participating in education programmes five days a week. Meanwhile, 8% attended four days weekly, indicating some barriers to full participation that require targeted support to ensure consistent engagement across all age groups.

Children not attending school

For the **28%** households with children not attending school, the **top 5** reasons reported for not being in school include:

- **38%** The **child is too old** for education
- **30%** The child is **married**
- **18%** The child has reached the age of **menstruation** and can no longer attend
- **16%** The child **has their own child**

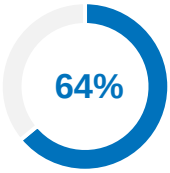
What can bring the children to enroll in the education programmes?



RECOMMENDATIONS

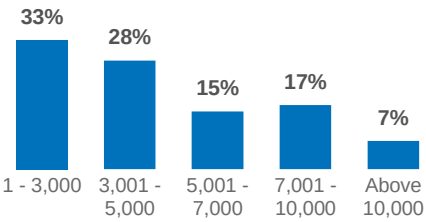
- **Address attendance barriers and specialized needs**: Increase the number of single sex classrooms for older adolescent girls and boys and improve access to menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facilities to ensure a safe and supportive environment that encourages school attendance.
- **Alternative learning pathways:** Provide alternative learning programmes, such as accelerated education and skills development programmes, to increase enrolment and retention, especially for adolescent girls and out-of-school children.
- **Teacher training and recruitment**: Continue and increase support to professional development for teachers. And increase the recruitment of female teaching volunteers.

LIVELIHOODS AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

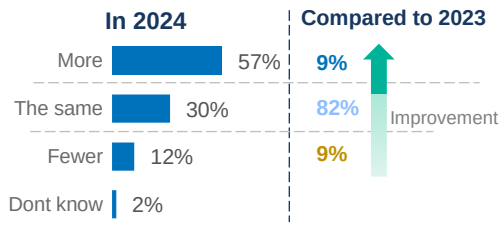


of the households reported to have a source of income (Compared to **34%** in BCNA 2023 and **73%** in Cox's Bazar 2024)

Total HH income average per month (BDT)



Changes in affordability of goods & services

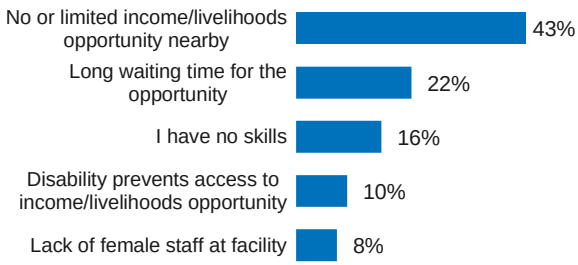


▲ General Improvement in affordability of goods and services

Despite a significant improvement in income opportunities compared to previous assessments, households on Bhasan Char continue to face significant barriers to sustainable livelihoods. Approximately **64%** of households reported having a source of income, a marked increase from the 34% recorded in BCNA 2023, with fishing and volunteer engagement emerging as key sources. However, one third of households earns below BDT 3,000 ($USD 27) per month, an amount insufficient to meet basic needs. Additionally, 68% of households remain heavily reliant on humanitarian assistance to bridge the income gap, highlighting the ongoing dependency on aid. Affordability had greatly improved with **57%** able to afford more goods and services this year compared to 2023.

Access to livelihoods

Barriers to livelihood access mirror those seen in earlier assessments: long waiting times for opportunities, limited availability of market-linked jobs, and restricted roles for women continue to impede economic progress. Only 18% of households reported accessing skills training, with a limited conversion rate to income generation—just 24% of participants engaged in relevant employment post-training. These challenges underline the need for training programmes to better align with market demands and include gender-inclusive measures to enhance women's participation.



Homestead gardening

72% of the households reported to have a member participating in a homestead gardening project

However, more than half of respondents reported declining yields due to delayed distribution of agricultural inputs and limited technical support. These findings highlight a need for targeted interventions, including expanded microfinance access, enhanced vocational programmes, and improved agricultural support, to reduce dependency on aid and foster resilience in the face of persistent economic challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Diversify and align vocational training with market demand**: Develop accessible, market-driven vocational training programmes tailored to Bhasan Char's economic context. Ensure training aligns with available livelihood opportunities, including fishing, agriculture to enhance employability and income generation.
- **Promote gender-sensitive livelihood support**: Address gender-specific barriers to increase the participation of women and youth in skills development programmes. Prioritize the recruitment of female trainers and facilitators to create a more inclusive learning environment.
- **Enhance access to financial services and agricultural support**: Facilitate access to micro-financing, credit schemes, and business grants to enable refugees to establish small businesses and scale livelihood activities. Provide rational support for agricultural resources, such as seeds, tools, and training on climate-resilient gardening practices, to boost household-level food security and sustainable livelihoods.

Refugees fishing in one of the lakes on Bhasan Char.
© UNHCR/Shari Yasmin Nijman

WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)

Access to safe water

Access to safe water, adequate sanitation, and proper hygiene practices on Bhasan Char has shown a good outlook in 2024. **93%** of households reported having sufficient water to meet their daily needs for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene, with most relying on hand-pumps connected to deep tubewells. Efforts to maintain and improve water quality, as well as ensure sustainable access to water, remain essential priorities, especially for the **7%** of households still facing challenges with water sufficiency.

Households reported they have enough water for all household need (bathing, cleaning, washing, drinking, cooking, personal hygiene.

Source of drinking water

80% of the households reported the sources of drinking water as hand-pump on deep tubewell and **20%** use hand-pump in kitchen

Hygiene

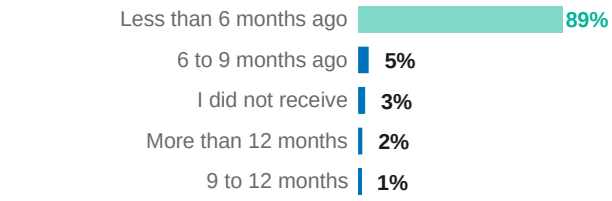
89%
reported that of the women & girls receive menstrual hygiene kits on time (compared to **83%** in Cox's Bazar)

96%
reported that respondents are (satisfied **68%** + very satisfied **28%**) with the quality of menstrual hygiene kits

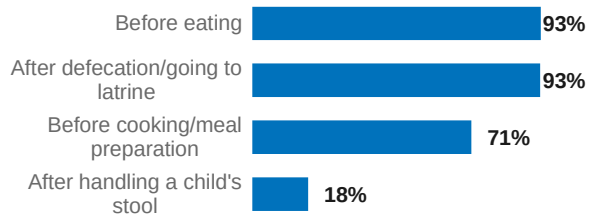
99.3%
of people interviewed are able to identify at least three means to protect themselves from diarrheal diseases (**0.7%** don't know)

97%
reported that households had soap (seen by enumerator) at the time of interview)

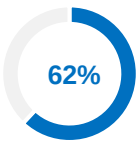
The last time women & girls in the household received their menstrual hygiene kit (pads/clothes)



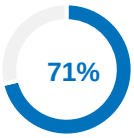
Households that know maximum 3 critical times when to wash hands*



Sanitation



households with members with disabilities who reported that they have sufficient access to latrines

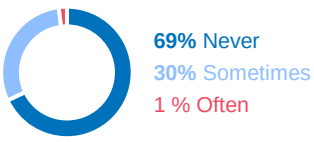


households reported that they feel safe using the communal latrine at night / evening

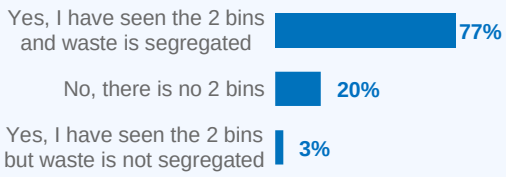
Privacy and access to latrine and bathing rooms remains a challenge, especially for women, girls, and persons with disabilities. While most households have access to communal latrines, **29%** of women report feeling unsafe using latrines at night due to inadequate lighting and privacy concerns. Only **38%** of people with disabilities do not have sufficient access to sanitation facilities. These findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive upgrades to communal sanitation infrastructure.

Solid waste

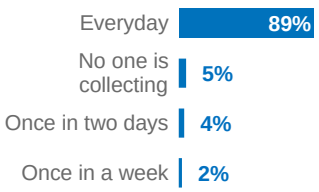
Households who frequently **find visible waste in their surroundings (vicinity)**



Households that segregate waste



Frequency of waste collection from the household



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Improve latrine safety and accessibility**: Address safety concerns, particularly for women and children, by enhancing lighting and privacy in communal latrines. Ensure that 38% of households with persons with disabilities have sufficient and accessible sanitation facilities.

PROTECTION

General protection

Security Concerns:

81%

reported they have not felt any concern about security in the cluster (Abductions, kidnapping, shooting) compared to past 12 months.

However, over **50%** of households reported theft as their most significant security concerns in the past 6 months, with other security concerns like violence among neighbors **13%**, abduction/kidnapping **7%**, and extortion **3%**.

Note that these are concerns and not actual cases or incidents on Bhasan Char.

Psychosocial distress:

11%

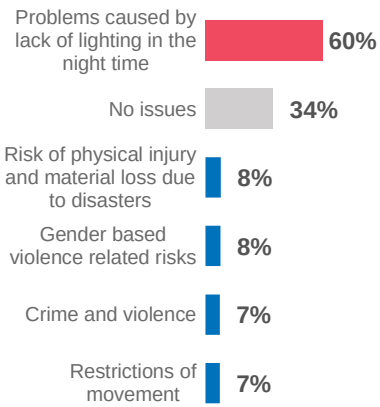
of households reported members experiencing psychological distress, with fearfulness **47%** and trauma **38%** being the most common symptoms.

Freedom of Movement

96%

of households reported no restrictions in movement within the island.

% of households perceiving biggest protection risks in the area

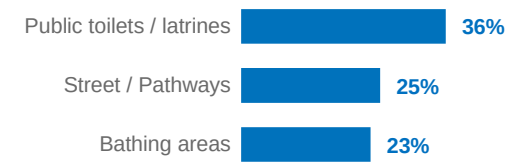


Gender-based violence (GBV)

Women and girls remain vulnerable to GBV risks, with the majority of households (**55%**) reporting no change in safety concerns compared to the previous year, while **19%** observed a moderate increase and **4%** noted a significant rise in safety concerns.

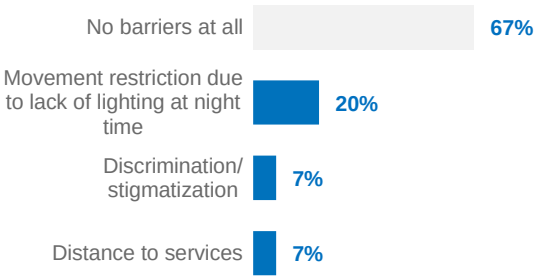
Public toilets (**36%**), bathing areas (**23%**), and street pathways (**25%**) were identified as the most unsafe locations for women and girls. These findings highlight the persistent threat posed by inadequate lighting and a lack of privacy in shared spaces.

Top 3 locations considered unsafe by women and girls*



Access to GBV services remains critical, with **64%** of households reporting that women and girls have timely access to support facilities within 72 hours of an incident. The key service points include Women-Girl Safe Spaces (92%), Women-Led Community Centres (56%), and Women-Friendly Spaces (19%). However, awareness gaps persist, with 22% of respondents indicating they were unaware of available GBV services. Movement restrictions, within the island, often related to inadequate lighting, were cited as barriers to accessing these services. These findings highlight the need for improved awareness campaigns and enhanced lighting in communal areas.

Top 3 barriers to GBV related services



Child protection

99%

reported that they have no child not currently living in the household.

1% reported they have a child, son or daughter not currently living in the household

96%

reported they have no child exhibiting signs of **psychological distress** (e.g. anxiety, depression)

2%

reported that a child in their household is currently or has ever been **married**

97%

% reported they have no child in the household that experienced a form of **violence or abuse** in the past 6 months

Nearly all households (**99%**) reported no unaccompanied or separated children living outside their household, while only **2%** reported having a child currently or previously married. Access to child protection services is high, with **93%** of households reporting access to child protection support. However, among the **7%** without access, the main reasons cited were a lack of awareness of services (**92**%) and limited service provision (**8%**).

RECOMMENDATIONS

General protection

- **Community-based mechanisms**: Strengthen community-led protection initiatives by enhancing safety watch groups, conducting awareness campaigns, and improving lighting in communal areas to ensure safety for women, children, and persons with disabilities, especially at night.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

- **GBV support services:** Expand Women-Girl Safe Spaces, strengthen coordination with health and legal systems, and ensure timely access to medical, psychosocial, and legal assistance for GBV survivors.
- **Improve privacy and safety in public areas:** Improve communal spaces such as latrines, bathing facilities, and pathways to include proper lighting, locks, and partitions, ensuring safety and privacy for women and girls. Conduct regular safety audits and work closely with community groups to implement measures that mitigate GBV risks and foster secure, gender-sensitive environments.

Child protection

- **Preventing child labour and marriage:** Conduct targeted awareness campaigns to address socio-economic factors driving child labour and early marriage.
- **Child-friendly services:** Develop safe spaces for children, provide recreational activities, offer mental health and psychosocial support, and equip child protection workers with ongoing training to address complex protection issues effectively.

SITE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT & SHELTER- NFI

97%
households reported they had a refill of LPG in the last 3 months.

For the **3%** that didn't have LPG; 55% spent 1-14 days and 45% spent 30 days & above without LPG

5%
know of an incident or situation that a family **rented or sold LPG** to other families

94%
households reported they have a source of reliable lighting predominantly through solar power systems

Access to reliable energy for cooking and lighting is critical for households on Bhasan Char. Currently, **98%** of households rely on LPG as their primary cooking fuel, reducing reliance on less sustainable options like firewood. This shift has helped mitigate environmental risks.

Shelter (housing & living conditions)

Shelter conditions have seen a marked improvement compared to 2023. In BCNA 2024, **80%** of households reported sufficient space for sleeping without issues, a significant increase from the **46%** reported in BCNA 2023. Additionally, **20%** of households reported having sufficient space for sleeping but with some issues, compared to **54%** in 2023. This demonstrates progress in improving shelter conditions with the repair of the leaking roofs which was a main challenge in 2023.

NFI Assistance

89% households reported to have received Shelter or NFI assistance in the past 30 days prior to the data collection

96% households reported that they were satisfied with the assistance they received from shelter, non-food items, and site management.

4% of households that were not satisfied cited insufficient assistance and delays in delivery of the aid.

HEALTH

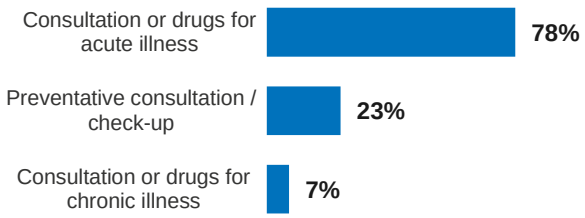
Health care access

41% of individuals had a health problem and needed to access healthcare in the 3 months prior to data collection

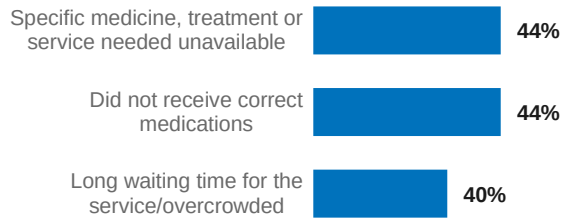
87% of those individuals managed to access the healthcare they needed

In 2024, **41%** of respondents reported experiencing a health problem in the three months prior to data collection, a decrease from 60% in 2023. Among those needing healthcare, **87%** managed to access the necessary services in 2024, a slight decline compared to 90% in 2023. While the prevalence of health issues has decreased, access to healthcare saw a minor drop, highlighting the need for sustained improvements in service delivery.

Type of healthcare need, by the 41% of individuals with a healthcare need in the 3 months prior to data collection



Top 3 barriers experienced by households accessing in health care



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Sustain and enhance primary and secondary healthcare**: Strengthen healthcare delivery on Bhasan Char with a focus on improving the quality of services, including maternal and pediatric care, mental health, and management of non-communicable disease. Expand community-based health approaches to ensure better outreach and support.
- **Focus on maternal and child health:** Continue the support for pregnant women and children under five through expanded prenatal and postnatal care services, skilled birth attendance, and nutritional support.
- **Strengthen inclusive access:** Enhance healthcare access for persons with disabilities and the elderly through targeted initiatives, such as specialized services and accessible infrastructure, to meet their specific needs.

CROSS CUTTING THEMES (Disability, AAP, EPR, Youth, GiHA, PSEA)

(AAP- Accountability to Affected Population, EPR- Emergency Preparedness and Response, GiHA- Gender in Humanitarian Action, PSEA- Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse)

Disability

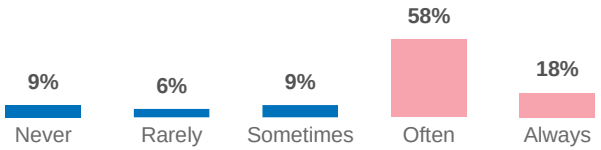
3.7% of respondents who declared a disability for themselves had at least one disability, compared to the **2.6%** provided from the registration data in September 2024

Breakdown per category

- **2.6%** has difficulty seeing even after wearing glasses
- **1.7%** has difficulty hearing even after wearing hearing aid
- **3.7%** has difficulty walking and climbing steps
- **1.9%** has difficulty remembering or concentrating
- **2%** has difficulty with self-care
- **0.9%** has difficulty understanding or being understood

Key gaps*

Persons that experienced challenges in accessing education, healthcare, foods, shelter support, humanitarian assistance, and in employment, and social interactions due to his/her impairment.



**Asked to only the persons who reported have a disability*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Accessible infrastructure**: Upgrade infrastructure, particularly WASH and education facilities, communal areas, and shelters, to ensure more accessibility and safety for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- **Inclusive communication**: Continue to create accessible information materials in audio and visual formats, and ensure disability-friendly messaging through strategic locations and partnerships with disability-focused organizations.
- **Active consultation**: Continue to conduct active and regular consultations with PwDs at all stages of project cycles to incorporate their feedback and address their specific challenges.

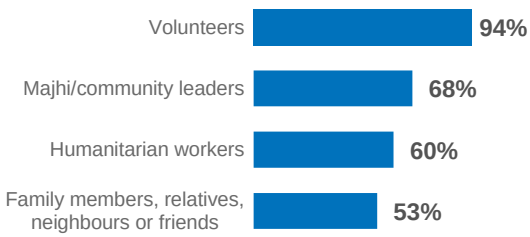
Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

Information dissemination

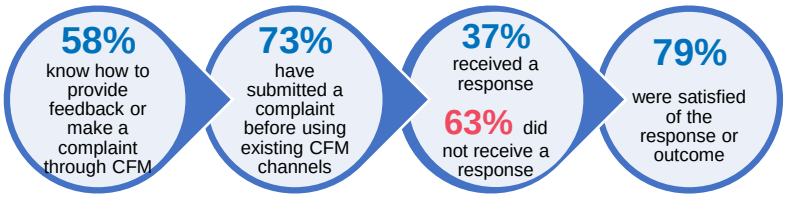
99% feel that they **receive enough information** about humanitarian services and assistance

99.8% feel that they can **easily understand** the information you receive about humanitarian services and assistance

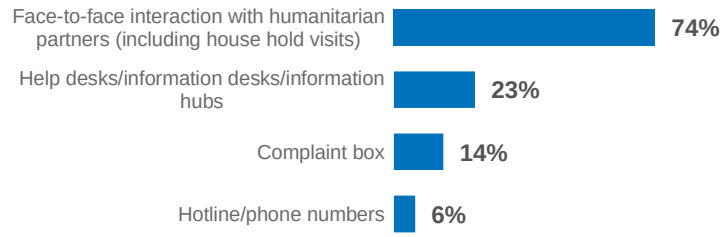
Preferred Channels to receive information regarding humanitarian services and other important topics* *(Top 5)*



Complaints Feedback and Response (CFM) (Formal)



Preferred Channels to receive information regarding humanitarian services and other important topics* *(Top 5)*



Complaints Feedback and Response (Informal)

Only **12%** of households reported ever sharing a complaint or feedback outside formal channels. The most commonly used informal channels include community leaders or Majhis (**69%**) and CIC offices (**51%**). These informal mechanisms are valued for their accessibility but often lack structured follow-up, with a significant proportion of complaints remaining unaddressed.

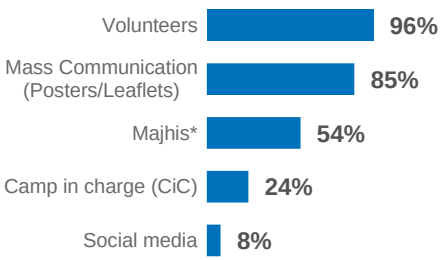
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Enhance respectful interactions**: Maintain and build on the positive perception of aid workers, with **86%** of respondents feeling treated with respect and dignity. Continue training staff on respectful communication and inclusive practices to sustain this standard.
- **Leverage community leaders and volunteers**: Strengthen the role of community leaders and volunteers in information dissemination and feedback collection, as they are the most trusted sources for the population. Provide additional training and resources to empower them to handle feedback efficiently and relay it to formal mechanisms.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

98% Households reported that members of the household **received information** (early warning alert) before the cyclone, flooding, landslide, fire in 2024

Sources of information (early warning) for incidents of natural disasters such as cyclone, flooding, fire) *(Top 5)*



RECOMMENDATIONS

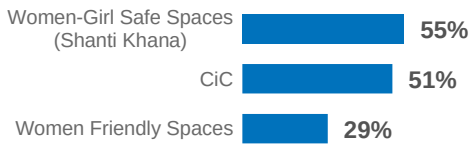
- **Enhance community training**: Continue to organize regular training sessions and drills, ensuring the **62%** of households that have not participated in such activities gain essential knowledge and skills for emergency response.
- **Strengthen disaster management engagement**: Increase community interaction with disaster management committees and control rooms, which currently engage only **23%** of households.

Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

67% Households reported they **did not** take part in any awareness sessions or training on sensitive issues, such as inappropriate behavior by humanitarian workers

61% Households know where to go to raise any sensitive issues, such as inappropriate behavior by humanitarian workers

Channels where the PSEA issues are raised*



98% Households reported they feel **confident** about reporting misconduct by humanitarian workers

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expand awareness and training**: Broaden awareness campaigns and training efforts to ensure all beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups, clearly understand what constitutes misconduct and the appropriate channels for reporting it.

**Majhis in BC are also called the Camp focal point. But "Majhi" is the most used form.*

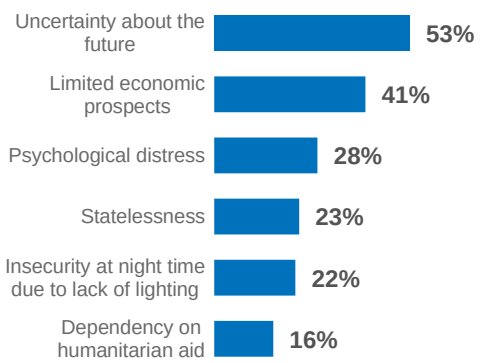
Youth

This analysis focuses on the **54%** of households with youth present during the interview.

Key highlights

- **Youth safety and participation**: The majority of youth feel safe (**94%**) but lack opportunities for community engagement or leadership (**69%** report no such opportunities).
- **Education and life skills training**: Only **2%** of youth have received regular life skills training, with **83%** having no exposure to life skills such as communication and decision-making.
- **Barriers to education**: Economic constraints (**53%**) and age-related constraints (**40%**) are top reasons for youth school dropout, followed by child marriage (**31%**) and limited educational opportunities.
- **Social support and coping mechanisms**: Socializing with friends is a common coping strategy (**57%**), while **16%** consider migration as an option, and 10% report substance abuse as a way to cope.
- **Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services**: Family planning (**55%**) and menstrual regulation (**37%**) are the most accessed services.

The youth identified the risks and challenges below they currently face (Top 6)



- **Youth participation in leadership roles and decision-making** remains limited, with only **31%** reporting opportunities to contribute to their community or take on leadership roles. Contributing barriers include a lack of skills (**67%**), perceptions of not being taken seriously (**29%**), and gender-related constraints (**19%**). Additionally, **84%** of youth have not been involved in humanitarian activities such as planning, implementation, or monitoring, further highlighting the gap in meaningful engagement

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Life skills and leadership training**: Only **12%** of youth reported having access to life skills and leadership programmes. Expanding these initiatives is essential to equip them with the tools needed for active participation in community decision-making and personal development.
- **Access to safe social spaces**: With **78%** of youth highlighting the lack of safe, gender-sensitive spaces, there is an urgent need to establish youth-friendly environments. These spaces should provide opportunities for recreation, social interactions, and personal growth while addressing gender and cultural constraints.
- **Economic and educational support**: **45%** of youth reported dropping out of school due to financial constraints. Introducing scholarships, flexible learning options, and vocational training will help bridge this gap, ensuring access to education and pathways to sustainable livelihoods.

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unicef

Data collection:

acted

Find the comprehensive results for all BCNA indicators on the Analytical dashboard.