



EDUCATION SECTOR

Distance Learning Need Assessment

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

Cox's Bazar is home to more than 855,000 Rohingya refugees, who have inadequate access to healthcare and live in small, confined shelters. Refugees living in overcrowded camps lack access to adequate shelter, water and sanitation, posing major challenges in efforts to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Due to the characterization of education as "non-life saving" on March 24th 2020 by the Cox's Bazar-based Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), severe access restrictions have resulted in the closure of more than 6,000 learning spaces in Rohingya refugee camps, with more than 325,000 children losing access to learning opportunities. Extended learning disruptions will lead to significant learning loss, a lack of grade level progression, as well as enormous numbers of long term dropouts amongst the most vulnerable children. The Education Sector in Cox's Bazar is working with all sector partners to identify feasible solutions for distance learning despite of policy restriction on mobile phone, internet and digital devices. The primary considerations for this assessment are equity and access-and the need to create emergency remote teaching and learning solutions which are multi-faceted in delivery modality and reach as many households as possible, including the most vulnerable.

2. THE OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES FOR THIS ASSESSMENT ARE

1. To better understand household level demographics in targeted households
2. To better understand household level connectivity (devices, electricity and usage)
3. To better understand household level support structures for emergency remote teaching and learning
4. To better understanding existing channels of communication for COVID-19 related information
5. To use this enhanced understanding to design new emergency remote teaching and learning programs focused on equitable access to learning for (short and long term) out of school Rohingya children

3. METHODOLOGY

As a starting point for this assessment, an initial Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) survey questionnaire was developed by the technical team of the IRC. Bangladesh Education Department team members then piloted this RNA with 30 households, conducting the survey over the phone and incorporating feedback on delivery modality, feasibility, and usability. This feedback was then incorporated into a finalized remote RNA. The Bangladesh Education Department team members were then remotely trained on quality data collection. The RNA survey was conducted via mobile phone (due to access restrictions) by 10 staff (6 male, 4 female) from the IRC Education Department (including the project Senior Officer, Project Officer and Project Assistants) over a period of 7 days, with an average individual survey duration of 25 minutes. An additional 3 days was spent on data cleaning and verification. The assessment initially targeted 788 households who have children currently enrolled in IRC's education program, and assessors were able to reach 785 of these households. The assessment was conducted in Camp 2E located in Ukhia Upazila and Camp 22 located in Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar district. Quantitative data analysis was performed using Excel, while qualitative data were inductively analyzed using manual thematic and content analyses.



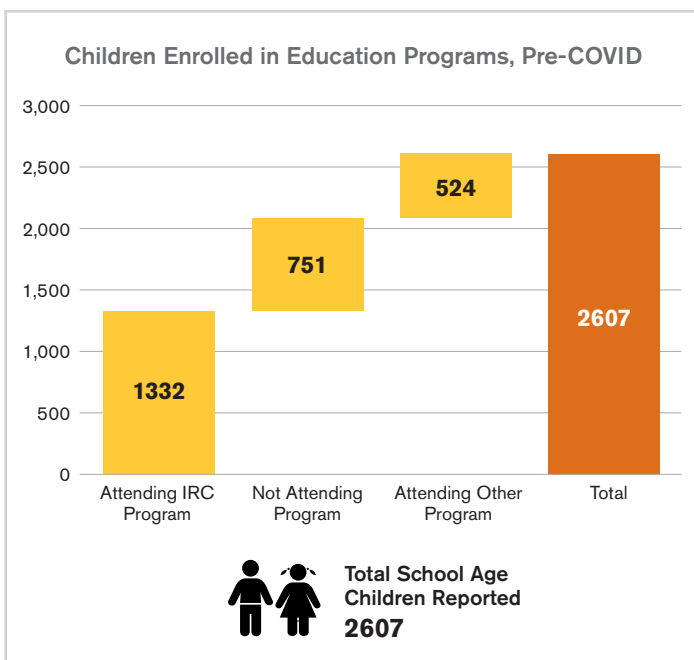
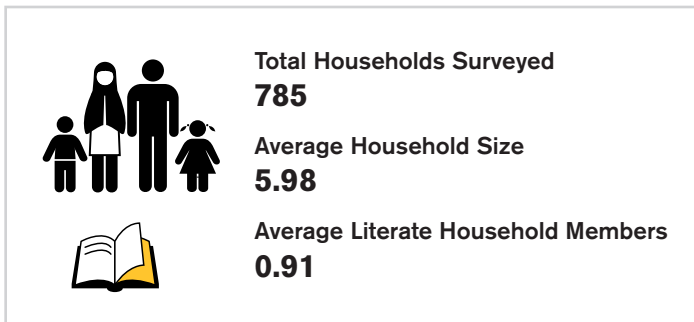
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4. FINDINGS

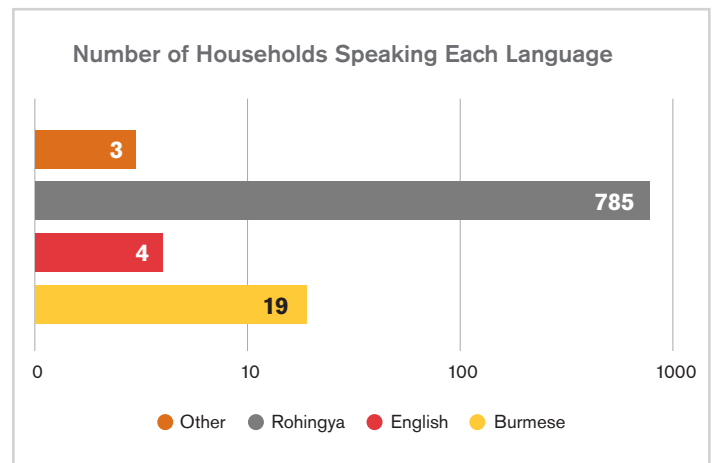
> A. Household Demographics

The assessment reached 785 households (612 male and 173 female respondents) with the following overall demographics:

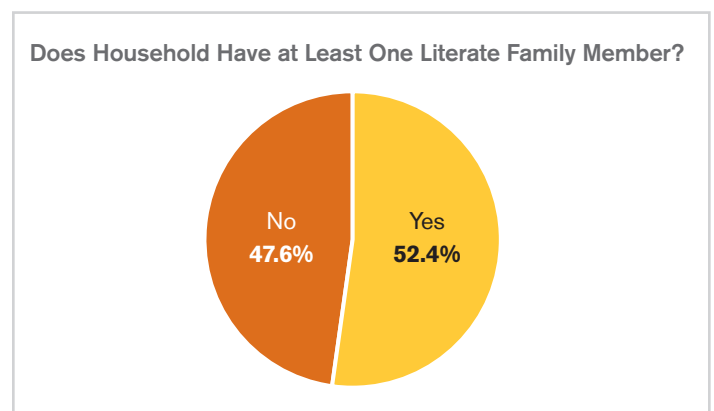
- Total family members: 4692
- Total school age children (3-24 years-Education Sector target age): 2607
- Total children enrolled in IRC's learning centers (6-14 years): 1332
- Total children enrolled in other learning centers (3-24 years): 524
- Total out of school children (3-24 years): 751
- Total children (0-3 years): 494



These demographics indicate that 29% of children are reported to be out of school (OOSC) even before the COVID-19 disruptions, constituting a significant percentage of children who require reengagement with learning at the household level, in addition to the 71% of children reported to be accessing learning centers before the COVID-19 disruptions. Thus, new emergency remote learning interventions should include clear guidance on how longer-term OOSC will be targeted along with “in school” children at household level. Findings show that households contain high numbers of older siblings (15-24), potentially offering another support structure for younger siblings to assist home based learning during the pandemic. 16% of children are reported to be 0-3 years of age in targeted households, highlighting demographic space for potential interventions with Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD).



In terms of spoken language at household level, the overwhelming majority (97% of households) report the exclusive use of the Rohingya language, while 2% HHs mentioned a combination of Rohingya and Burmese, and 1% mentioned about the combination of Rohingya, Burmese and English. These statistics indicate that any remote support for distance learning is required to include a strong element of the Rohingya (oral) language, especially if engaging with caregivers and out of school children.

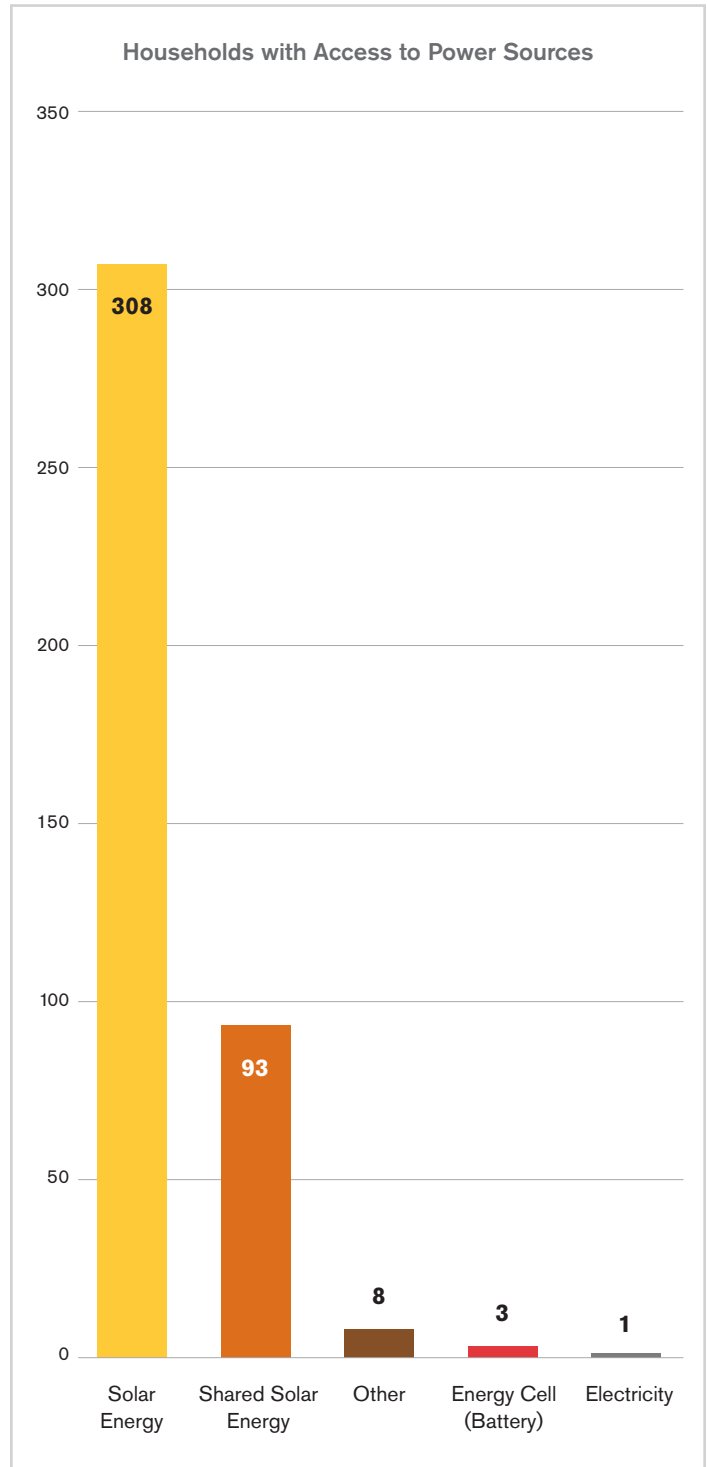
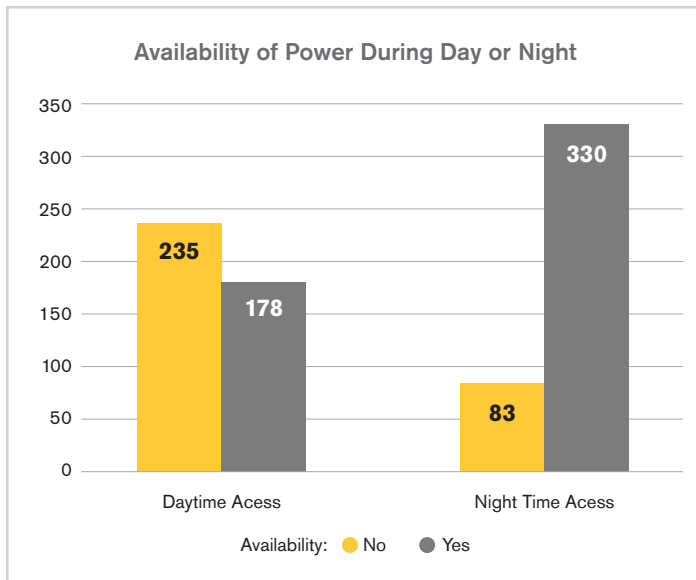


> B. Connectivity of Households

1. Electricity: to better understand households' ability to charge devices and utilize technology enabled devices for learning support

Only 52% of households reported access to power in the camps, representing a significant barrier to the utilization of electronic devices as a widespread medium for home learning. Of these 52%, solar is the most common source of power, with 97% of households who have access receiving this electricity from solar panels. Of families with solar panels for electricity, 75% of them report to have their own solar panels, with 22% reporting having shared solar systems. Information regarding the wattage of these systems was not obtained during this remote assessment.

Of the assessed households, only 22% of those with power report having more than 4 hours of daily access, while 63% have access to between 3-4 hours of power and 15% have access to between 1-2 hours of daily power. Thus, in understanding both overall access to electricity, as well as the daily duration of this access, it is important to design remote learning programming via platforms which are not dependent on regular access to electricity, or if they are dependent on utilizing devices which require electricity, design should be cognizant of electrical limitations and the need for households to use electricity allocations on other daily necessities. In reaching the most vulnerable, low-tech or no-tech solutions will be required as an essential component of learning support.



2. Radio: to better understand opportunities for remote radio learning

Of assessed households, 63.6% report having radio devices (either radio or mobile phones with FM radio features). However, 80% of them report not being aware of how to utilize radio, demonstrating the need for community outreach and sensitization on basic connectivity if radio is being considered as a medium for emergency remote teaching and learning. In terms of availability of local radio stations in the camps, 89.9% of households reported not knowing of availability, while 2% reported utilizing local radio channels more than 3 days in a week and 7.2% reported utilizing for less than 3 days in a week. This represents very limited acknowledged penetration of local radio channels in targeted camps.

Regarding the operability of radio devices, 69% of households with radios reported that they do not require additional support with purchase of batteries for radios, with 31% indicating need for this support, a factor warranting consideration for the design of radio based programming. Of the households which reported to have any kind of radio devices 98.9% of them are willing to allow children to listen radio programs for learning. The findings reflect that parents/caregivers are highly motivated to support children's learning though radio programming, but the availability of local radio frequencies and parents/caregivers knowledge on radio use are two big concerns for education programming in radio.

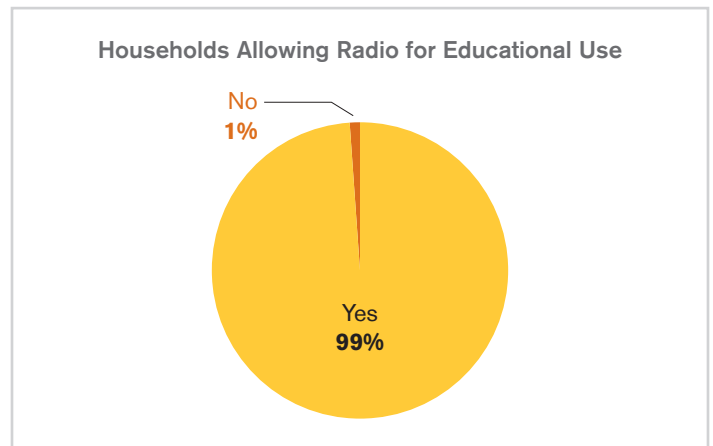
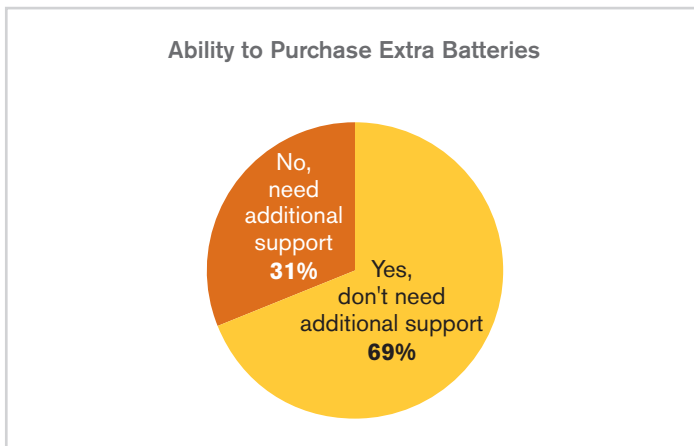
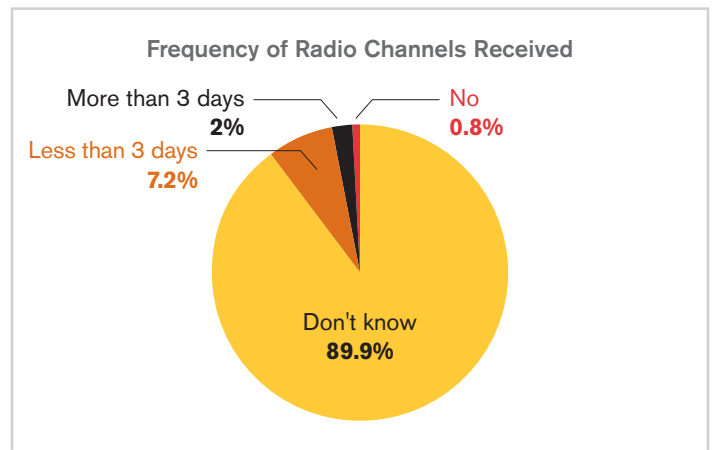
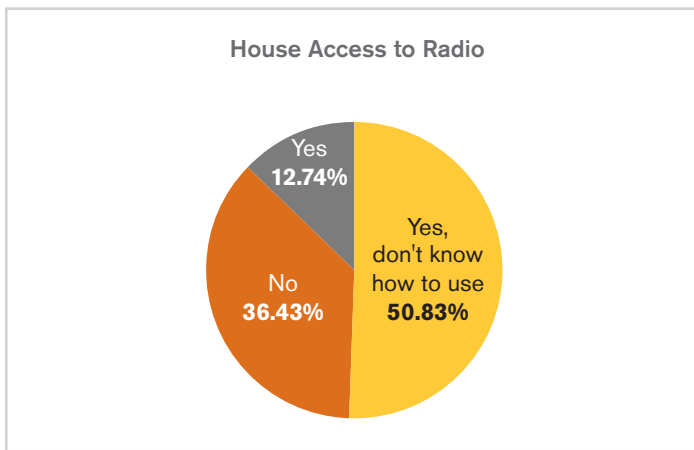
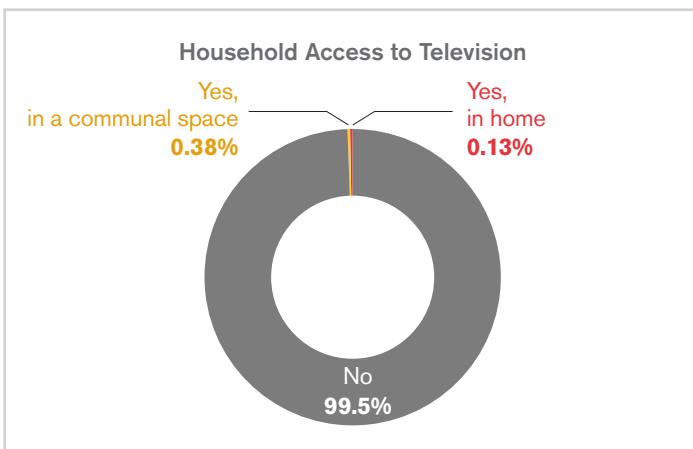




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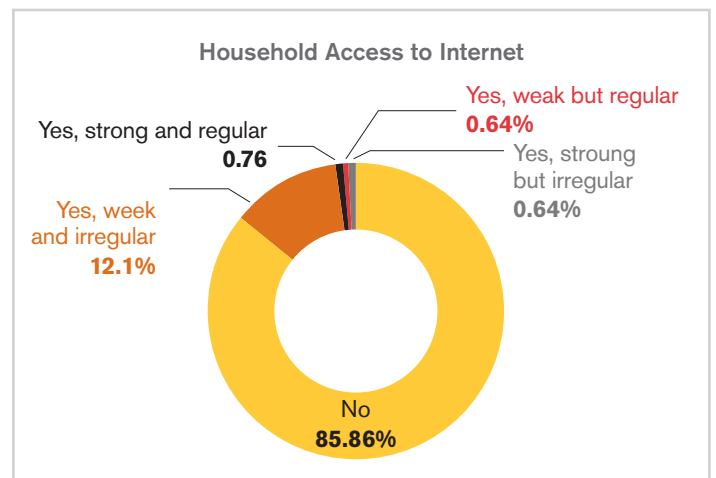
3. Television: to better understand opportunities for television-based remote learning programs

The assessment found 99.5% of households do not have access for any kind of television programming either at their individual household or communal space. Only 3 HHs reported access to television programs in communal spaces and 1 of the assessed households reported having their own television. The statistics clearly indicate the limitations of utilizing television programming for emergency remote teaching and learning during the COVID response, or as a general medium for learning post-pandemic.



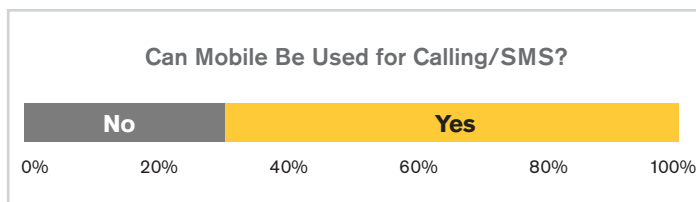
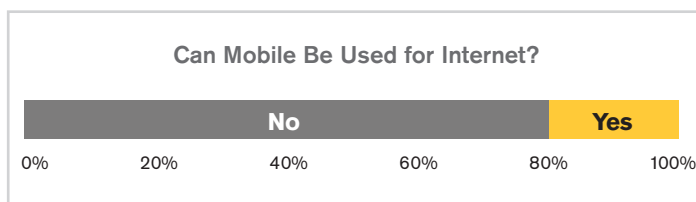
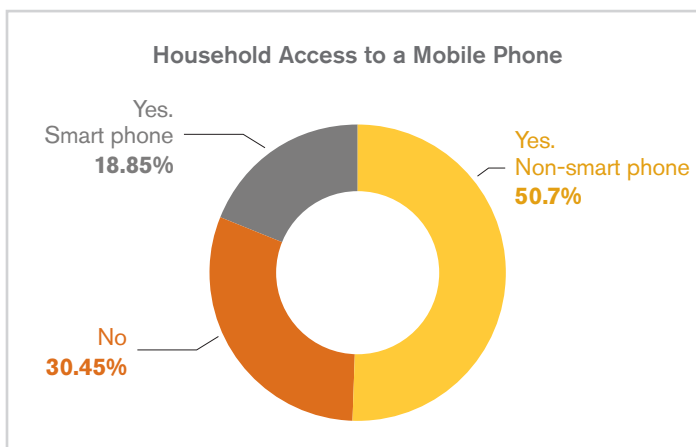
4. Internet: to better understand the ability of households to download remote learning content and utilize smart devices for accessing educational content and programming

Despite government policy restrictions on the use of internet in camps, the assessment found 14% of households report having access to the internet. Among these households, only 5% report having strong and regular network coverage, while 86% experience poor network coverage. Despite having poor network coverage, 98% of households with internet would be willing to allow children to use this access for educational purposes. The statistics show that despite very limited internet penetration in the camps, it could still represent one potential avenue for targeting remote support for distance learning for children and parents, if support for devices and connectivity was provided.



5. Mobile Phones: to understand how mobile phones, whether simple or smart, might be utilized for home learning support and information sharing

Despite policy restrictions by the government on the use of mobile phones in the displacement camps, the assessment found that 70% of households report having mobiles. Of these 70%, 27% report having phones with “smart” features and 73% reporting having non-smart/classic mobile phones. Regardless of the mobile phone’s feature (smart or classic) 97% of households reporting being willing to receive phone calls or SMS to support their children’s learning. These statistics indicate mobile phones as one of the key potential channels for facilitating remote support for distance learning. As most of the assessed households have classic phones, interactive phone calls, SMS and IVR could be effective mode of delivering remote support for parents/ caregivers and children. Additionally, in considering the low percentage of smart phones and poor overall levels of internet connectivity, some degree of light content dissemination through WhatsApp and Facebook groups could be investigated as a sub-component of an emergency remote learning program.



> C. Home Learning Support Structures

1. Supervision of Children and Literacy: to understand key home learning supervision structures and literacy rates of household members

85% of respondents indicated mothers as the key focal point for day to day supervision of children in the household, while in only 3% of cases this was reported to be the father and in 9% of cases supervision was reported to be a common effort by mothers, fathers and siblings. 68.5% of households report having at least one literate person. Among these 68.5% of households, 28.6% report only the mother being literate, 25% report only the father as literate, and 22.6% report having only elder brother/sister as literate members. The statistics show that the caregiver led messaging should target primarily the mother, but also take into account households with mixed responsibility roles. In addition, caregiver messaging needs to take into account the lack of basic literacy skills in many households, and design messaging around audio rather than written, or utilize a combination of approaches in engaging caregivers.

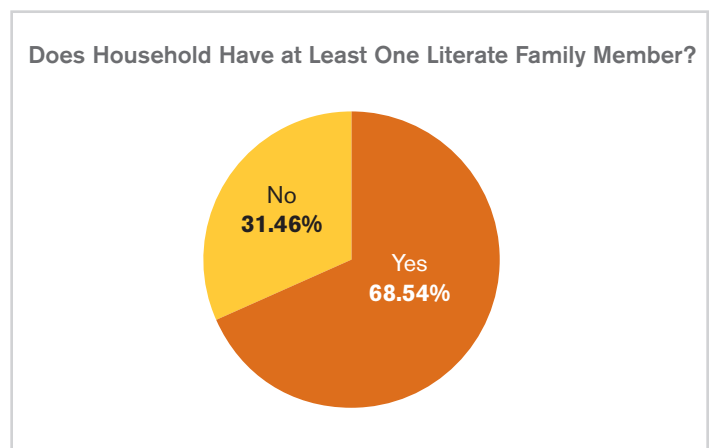
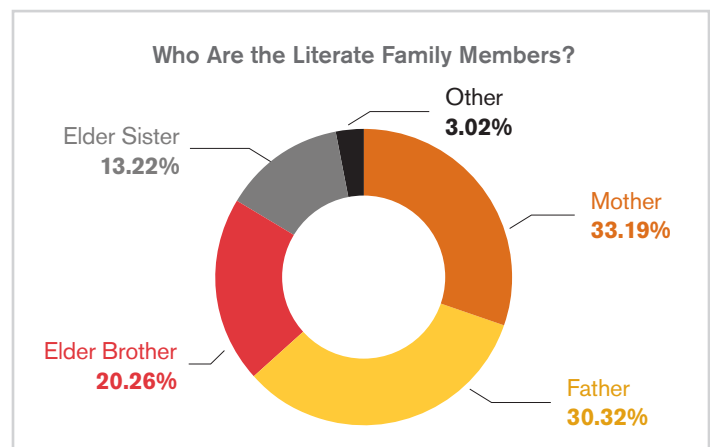
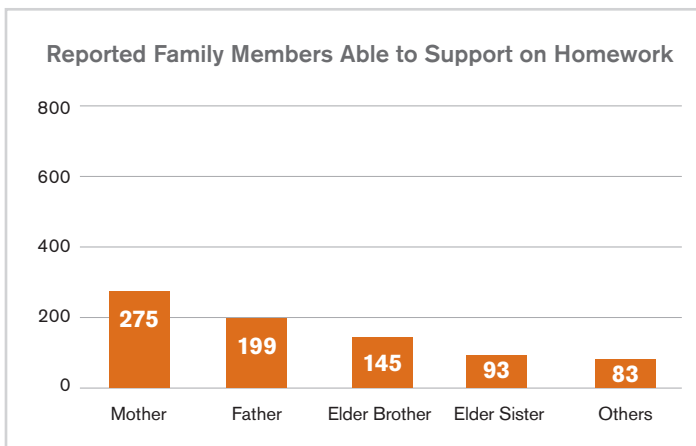




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2. Homework Support for Children: to understand who regularly supports children with homework and remote learning extensions

In better understanding household support structures for learning, the assessment looked at who in the household regularly helped children enrolled in learning centers with the homework (pre-pandemic). 80% of households reported that someone helps children for their homework during regular school year. In terms of nuances with this support, 30% of these households report mothers taking this supportive role, 30% report fathers taking this role, and 19.7% report siblings (older brothers and sisters) taking this role, with 21% reporting that parents and siblings together provide this support. These statistics reflect the necessary engagement of mothers, fathers and siblings for helping children at home with work. Therefore, these key stakeholders at household level should all be targeted in home based learning support program design, outreach and messaging.



3. Reading materials at HH level: to understand access to print materials at home which might be further utilized for home learning support

The assessment data shows that 99.7% of households report children have textbooks at their home, while 53% of households have additional story books and 98.3% of households have a Quran or other religious book. These statistics indicate the widespread availability of learning and reading materials in homes which can be utilized during emergency remote teaching and learning programming. However, households would require additional reading/storybooks for supporting early literacy development for new learners. The promotion of literacy rich environments at home is essential in helping children sustain learning levels in extended periods of disruption.

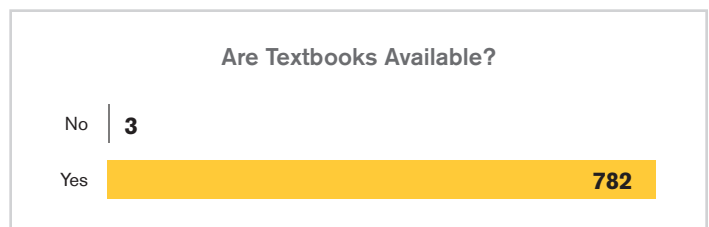
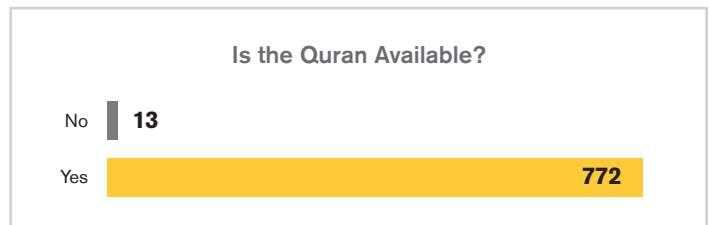




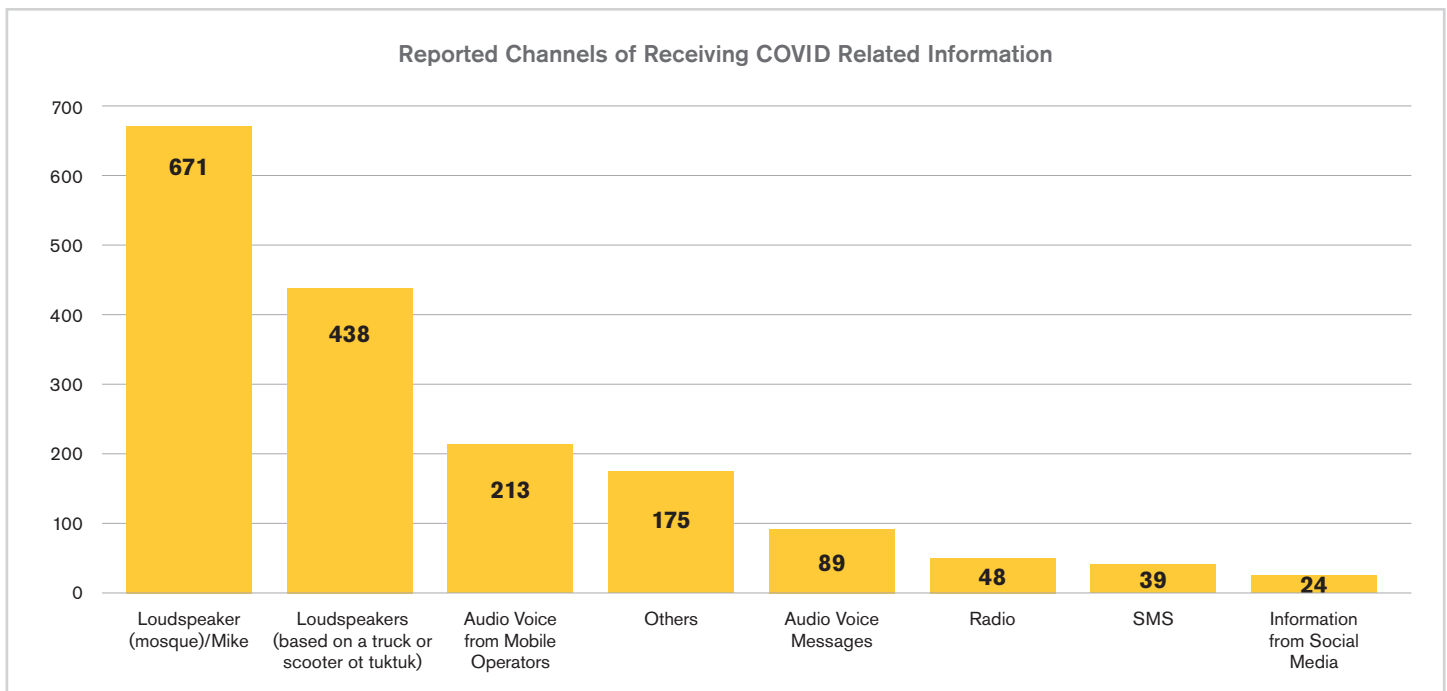
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> D. General COVID-19 Awareness

1. COVID Awareness at HH Level: to understand where households are receiving their COVID awareness messaging in designing common delivery platforms and mechanisms for reaching children and parents

The assessment indicates that all contacted households (100%) report receiving awareness messages on COVID-19, either from single or multiple sources. 24.3% of households received awareness message from a single source, 43.45% of households received messages from two sources and 25.86% of households received messaging from three different sources. The most popular sources for awareness messaging are loudspeaker

broadcasts from mosques (85.48%), loudspeakers based on a truck or scooter or tuk tuk (55.8%), and messages through telecommunication-SMS or recorded phone calls (43.44%). The statistics show the importance of utilizing multiple dissemination channels for information campaigns, in addition to the large role that mobile phones and telecommunications are taking in sharing key messaging on the pandemic. Despite the large role of telecommunications, awareness of the predominance of loudspeakers and the role of religious institutions in sharing key messaging is critical in designing and implementing effective emergency remote teaching messaging.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations based on these assessment findings include:

- **Multi-Platform Design and Implementation:** despite 70% of households reporting having access to mobile phones, only 52% report regular access to electricity and significant barriers exist for mobile internet. Thus, emergency remote teaching and learning programs, if designed around principles of equitable access, must utilize multiple content platforms for delivery, monitoring and assessment. These solutions must include “no tech” solutions and low tech solutions, including safe distribution of physical learning support items. Opportunities for reaching learners exists with radio programming, but proper sensitization must take place to ensure households clearly understand how to utilize radios for learning. Advocacy towards expanding access to internet, mobile phones and electricity must be continued to ensure households are able to effectively communicate and support children’s home learning.
- **Understanding Financial Barriers to Access:** the assessment found that 18.85% of households have smart phones, while 14% of households have internet access. However, internet usage is expensive, especially given the ongoing economic crisis, and requires a minimum data package for regular utilization. In addition, 31% of households with radios reporting needing support for purchasing batteries for regular use, despite almost all noting they would allow children to use their radios for learning. Therefore, if technology will be utilized for emergency remote teaching and learning, understanding and mitigating financial barriers for usage-with a clear understanding of equity and reaching the most vulnerable-is crucial.
- **Household Level Engagement Must Target All Stakeholders:** despite statistics indicating that mothers play the primary caregiver role in households, fathers and siblings are both reported to support children with homework in statistically significant numbers. Thus, home based learning design must take into account the multiple stakeholders at household level who need to be engaged with awareness, messaging and support. In addition, specific attention needs to be paid to literacy rates in households, and messaging and outreach should be tailored to audio-based dissemination to reach all stakeholders.
- **Expand Access to Home Learning Materials:** despite almost all children (99.7%) reported to have textbooks at home, only 53% report having additional storybooks or reading books at home. Textbooks can be utilized for home based learning support, but caregivers need additional, regular support and capacity building on how to check for children’s understanding, how to structure home learning sessions, and how to support children’s overall learning progression. Households also require additional reading materials to support children’s critical early literacy development.
- **Effective Remote Monitoring Systems:** a protracted crisis will require innovative approaches to monitoring home based learning, engaging stakeholders both at home and community level. In understanding that households receive key messaging from various touch points (mosques, loudspeakers, mobile phones), these different platforms should be utilized to share key messaging regarding emergency remote teaching and learning. Additional investigation on the utilization of public loudspeakers for social behavioral change campaigns and linkages with remote monitoring for home based learning programs should be investigated by educational actors.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD YEASIN/IRC BANGLADESH

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