



COVID-19: SITUATION REPORT

27 APRIL 2020



32M

programme participants oriented on COVID-19



100,000+

workers on the ground covering 64 districts



876,000

items of protective wear distributed



1.5M

hygiene products distributed



198,182

families received cash support

Make empathy go viral: Urgent appeal

BRAC has provided 198,182 families with cash support, including households living in ultra-poverty, those living in remote *haor* (wetlands) and *char* (riverine islands) areas, host communities in Cox's Bazar district, and indigenous communities.

Much more is needed, though. Stand beside a family today: <https://www.brac.net/covid19/donate/>



BRAC has reached **198,182** out of a targeted **200,000** families with cash support



FROM THE GROUND



Our tea stall was our only source of income. We had to shut it down when the government announced the lockdown.

The formula is simple for us. We work, earn and eat. My husband or I do not have regular jobs. We do not make enough to save.

We were very worried. How will we feed our child? How will we feed our parents?

This money will help us survive for at least two more weeks.

Rumi Rai is a recipient of BRAC's cash support initiative and lives in Habiganj, northwestern Bangladesh. The story was written by Supria Jahan, programme organiser of BRAC's integrated development programme.



COVID-19 timeline in Bangladesh

5,913

152

Cumulative confirmed cases

Cumulative deaths

3

0

8 MAR

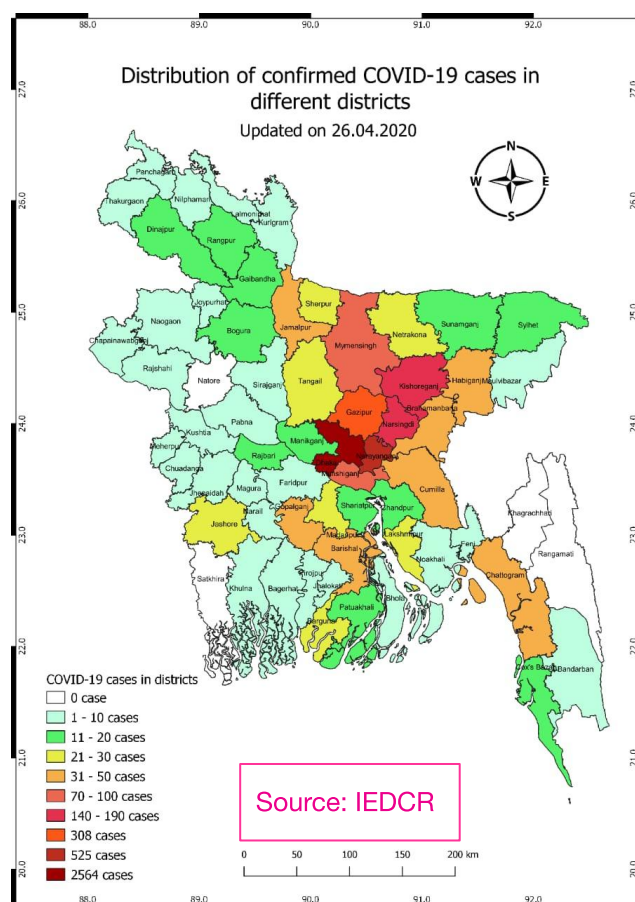
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Situation overview

- There are **2,774,135 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally**. 190,871 lives have been claimed across 213 countries, areas or territories (updated: 26 April 2020, 02:00 CEST, [World Health Organization](#)). **The world recorded the highest number of newly confirmed cases in a day** on 24 April 2020. A total of 105,616 people tested positive, continuing the trend of consecutive rises since 20 April.
- Bangladesh has 5,913 reported cases** as of 27 April 2020. 497 of these cases were identified in the last 24 hours. The government's Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) office has confirmed 152 deaths to date. Seven of the deaths were reported in the last 24 hours (updated: 27 April 2020, 14:30 BGD time). Cases have been now detected in 60 out of the 64 districts in Bangladesh. 45 districts are under lockdown.
- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been lauded by Forbes magazine**, and included in its list of [successful women leadership](#), for her efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic in Bangladesh.
- A United Nations report found that Bangladesh has taken the least social protection measures against COVID-19**. The country has adopted only one of the eight categories of social protection - income support.
- The Directorate General of Health Services **targets to scale up to test over 5,000 samples** daily by the first week of May. Currently, Bangladesh has the capacity to test approximately 3,500 samples daily with the help of 30 PCR (polymerase chain reaction) machines in 20 labs.
- Government of Bangladesh has decided to hire 2,000 new doctors and 4,000 nurses within a short period** to bolster the health system's capacity. It may be noted that Bangladesh only spends 0.9% of GDP in the health sector, which is one of the lowest in the world.
- BDT 52.25 billion (USD 6.2 million) has been allocated by the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Ministry for local government institutions** to meet various needs, including the payment of salaries and allowances of employees, and carrying out relief activities.
- The government has taken a special initiative to deliver relief to children living in vulnerable situations across the country**, allocating BDT 79.4 million (USD 937,300) for the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry to purchase food for children.
- Bangladesh Army has started distributing relief** in in the sub-district of Keraniganj in the outskirts of Dhaka. The army has a rich history of stepping in at the times of disaster. However, this time around, they are not directly involved in the distribution.
- The Bangladesh Foreign Minister has asked all 11 Bangladeshi ambassadors in Middle Eastern countries** to bolster their efforts to allow Bangladeshi migrant workers to go back to their jobs after the epidemic is over. They were also asked to continue to offer all assistance, including food and aid to workers. The minister has also recently asked the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to take steps to protect the jobs of Bangladeshi migrant workers.



- **All educational institutions are to remain closed** until September 2020. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh announced that this is applicable unless the situation improves.
- **Bangladesh has started to gradually open the economy.** Reportedly, under mounting pressure from international brands, the government accepted the business associations' plea to open hundreds of garment factories on Sunday. **Thousands of workers in the ready-made garments sector took public transport to rush back to Dhaka.** Although limited production and operation is permitted, some factories are now fully functional. At least 1,427 out of 7,602 export-oriented factories have been reopened. With the opening of these factories, a large number of associated production facilities such as garments accessories, packaging and labeling will be opening soon.
- **Jute mills along the Khulna-Jashore industrial belt resumed operations** bringing workers back to the factories. The industry will support the packaging demands of the current crop harvesting.
- As part of gradually opening the economy, **local groceries are now allowed to operate until 4pm** instead of 2pm.
- **A team of researchers at the Singapore University of Technology and Design published a study** that predicts that cases of coronavirus infection may fall by 99% in Bangladesh by the end of May. The university authority expressed caution when using the findings.
- **Few tests have been conducted inside the densely populated Rohingya camps** in Cox's Bazar. As of 26 April, there are a total of 459 Rohingya people in institutional quarantine, of which 27 people from eight families are in centres managed by BRAC.



BRAC's overall response to COVID-19

BRAC's immediate short-term focus is prevention, through community engagement, behaviour change and mass campaigning. This has included creating a world-standard course on COVID-19, using it to train staff and volunteers, equipping them with personal protective equipment and then sending them to millions of households armed with information and sanitation products.

In parallel, we are strengthening systems, through providing information, volunteers and resources to government and civil society organisations. This has included supporting community support teams which include a BRAC healthcare worker at the ward level to support case detection and verification, running a pharmacy surveillance pilot to get additional community data to identify hotspots and developing testing kiosks for additional sample collection.

After the recent shutdown, BRAC is focusing on ensuring short-term relief to low-income earners and those living in poverty in cities and rural villages. Treating it as a humanitarian crisis, BRAC has made an initial commitment of BDT 150 million and an appeal has been launched to mobilise additional funds. Public-private partnerships have also been created, as well as mobilising funding from institutional funders. BRAC will ensure the funds reach the people who need them the most.

As we realise that the economic impacts of the pandemic will be protracted, we are beginning to focus on livelihoods, developing a mid to long-term strategy for economic revitalisation of those living in extreme poverty. Amidst an extremely fluid situation, BRAC is focusing on remaining adaptive and agile, and keeping pace with changing needs, particularly the needs of the people in the most vulnerable situations. We are also undertaking rapid needs assessment and evidence generation for mid to long-term response.

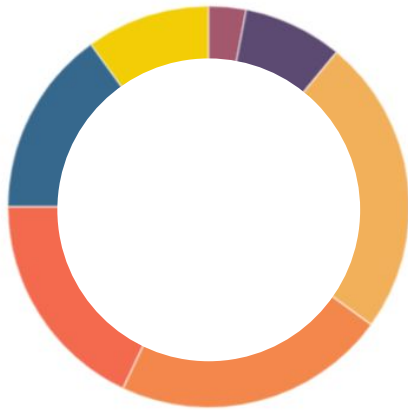


Emerging risks and challenges

- **Asymptomatic cases are causing community transmission to worsen.** Tracing has revealed that people who have not shown any signs of being infected by the virus, including doctors, have transmitted the disease to families and others around them. As many as 1,250 people currently infected in Bangladesh have been asymptomatic.
- **Stigma surrounding the disease is prompting people to hide symptoms.** Many patients are entering hospitals without declaring symptoms. Doctors and nurses have to go into isolation, or the institutions have to go under lockdown, if they unknowingly treat COVID-19 patients without the required protective gear and precautions.
- **Nearly 30 doctors tested positive for COVID-19** in the last week. More than 320 doctors have tested positive for COVID-19 so far, according to Bangladesh Doctors Foundation. What is concerning is that most of these doctors are being infected in hospitals not designated for COVID-19 treatment. Rising asymptomatic cases, hiding of COVID-19 symptoms by the patients in the face of social stigma, and community spread are all contributing to this trend.
- **Discrepancies exist between demand and supply for oxygen in hospitals.** Health institutions have weak monitoring systems and stocks are not refilled before they run out. In Bangladesh, [1,400 litres of gas](#) is allowed to be stored in a hospital at once.
- **Bangladesh's COVID-19 recovery rate (2.2%) is much lower than the recovery rates in neighbouring India (22.2%) and Pakistan (23.1%).** It is important to note, though, that fatality rates can appear higher in countries which only tested symptomatic patients. Fatality rates appear lower in countries with widespread testing.
- **The majority of tuberculosis patients in Bangladesh reside in the industrial belts of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur where TB testing services are now severely disrupted.** Many of the more vulnerable workers in factories have now travelled to their village homes, increasing the chance of spreading the disease.
- **The crisis will be aggravated by an expected dengue outbreak and natural calamities during the upcoming monsoon**, worsening the humanitarian needs of those living in poverty and vulnerable situations.
- **Vegetable farmers are selling produce at one-fifth of the usual price** in an effort to recoup losses against investments.
- **Measures to ensure the safety of workers are not clear even though Bangladesh has gradually started to open the economy.** While the RMG industry associations have prepared safety guidelines, it is unclear how ready and equipped the management and workers are to implement them. Failure to meet requirements and contain the spread of infection in the RMG sector can have a negative impact on Bangladesh's image in the international market.
- **20 people have tested positive in the district of Cox's Bazar** of southeastern Bangladesh. A total of 944 samples were tested in the district. The increase in cases raises the chances of the virus spreading in the Rohingya camps.

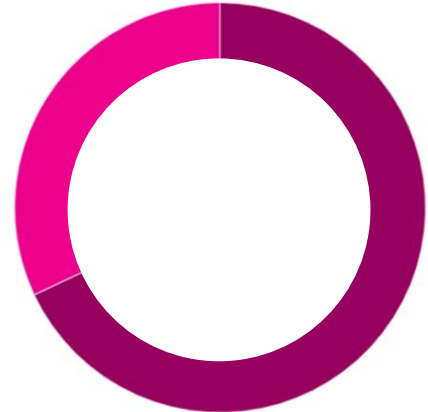


**Age distribution
of COVID-19 patients in
Bangladesh**



Age	% of confirmed cases	Age	% of confirmed cases
<10	3	11-20	8
21-30	24	31-40	22
41-50	18	51-60	15
60<	10		

**Sex distribution
of COVID-19 patients in
Bangladesh**



Sex	% of confirmed cases
Male	68
Female	32

Source: IEC DR



Orientation, safety and safeguarding of staff and communities

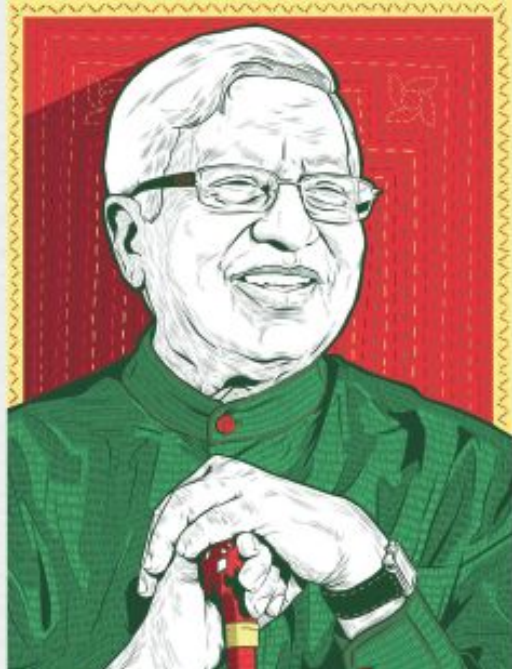
- **12 COVID-19 testing kiosks are now ready to operate in Dhaka and Narayanganj**, including in Sir Salimullah Medical College and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. These kiosks are expected to meet the demand for scaling up testing facilities required in Bangladesh. They are being set up by BRAC in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, following the Kerala testing and tracing model. BRAC has acquired the necessary protective equipment and trained staff for sample collection.
- **32 million programme participants** were oriented on COVID-19 to ensure prevention and outbreak of the disease in communities, including 227,667 persons with disabilities.
- **1.5 million** units of hygiene products have been distributed to staff and communities such as disinfectants, hand sanitisers, liquid and bathing soap.
- **876,000 protective wear items** such as face masks, hand gloves, surgical caps, coverall, and safety glasses were distributed.
- **133,529 BRAC staff** have been oriented on COVID-19 through BRAC's online orientation sessions with healthcare experts and training modules.
- **BRAC's integrated development programme has set up 149 hand-washing stations across 31 unions of five haor** (wetlands) sub-districts for farmers working in the annual harvest of *boro* rice - a special rice grown on residual in low-lying areas. Voice recordings of Shykh Seraj (journalist, media personality and agriculture development activist) are being played on speakers, advising on crop safety, social distancing and personal hygiene. The messages are reaching 21,600 people every day. These activities will continue throughout the harvesting season, until mid May 2020.





Partnerships

- **BRAC and Grameenphone** launched the *Dakchhe Amar Desh* (my country is calling me) campaign on April 24, calling upon individuals and businesses to join hands to support those in most need. Grameenphone will provide BDT 1,500 to each family as a cash incentive to purchase essentials. BRAC has now run two phases of the campaign in which almost 198,182 families were provided with Tk1,500 each.
- **BRAC and the World Food Programme** are exploring ways to distribute relief items (50 kg rice, 7.5 kg biscuits and BDT 2,300 for one month's support) to the marginalised families in Cox's Bazar Sadar, Ramu and Kutubdia sub-districts of Cox's Bazar during the lockdown.
- **BRAC has completed multiple stages of food and cash distribution with support from local government partners**, including Dhaka's North and South City Corporations, Sylhet City Corporation, Rajshahi City Corporation, Faridpur Municipality, Savar Municipality and Satkhira Municipality. Coordination with these government bodies has aided speed and effectiveness in reaching families who are most in need.
- **BRAC has contributed to the development of Bangladesh's Country Preparedness and Response Plan to combat COVID-19**, along with the Directorate General of Health Services (including its Community-Based Health Care), Directorate General of Family Planning, a2i and UN agencies. BRAC is directly involved in three pillars of the plan: Ensuring surveillance and laboratory support, contact tracing and point of entry screening; risk communication; and community engagement.
- **Australian Government's Department for Foreign Affairs (DFAT) and BRAC have entered their third phase of partnership.** This new phase aims to reduce the risks of COVID-19 through food assistance and enable a better assessment of the situation in Bangladesh.
- **Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and UNHCR are providing support for the COVID-19 response in Cox's Bazar**, for both the Rohingya and host communities, through the BRAC's humanitarian crisis management programme. UNICEF is also providing support, with a particular focus on ensuring children's learning and wellbeing.



Celebrating
84th birthday of
Sir Fazle Hasan Abed KCMG
1936-2019

BRAC Founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, our dearest *Abed bhai* (our brother), would have turned 84 today. He may not be with us in person, but his legacy continues to inspire us.

We are living through unprecedented times. The entire world is united in tackling COVID-19, and it is disrupting all of our lives at a scale we have never seen before. Those who were already living in the most vulnerable situations are feeling the effects the hardest. It is in challenging times like these that we remember the vision of Sir Fazle. Abed bhai's mantra 'small is beautiful, scale is necessary' is at the heart of BRAC's DNA, and it is the compass that guides us through these times.

When diarrhoeal disease was the single biggest killer of children under five years old in Bangladesh, Abed bhai trained women to take oral rehydration solution to every household in Bangladesh. The campaign resulted in a 60% drop in deaths in children younger than five years due to diarrhoea between 1980-2000. His empathy and visionary pragmatism saved an entire generation of Bangladeshi children.

It is this ambitious and clear targeting that we now return to. Our over 100,000 staff, healthcare workers and volunteers have spent the last month visiting households across Bangladesh, raising awareness, delivering life-saving sanitation products and supporting the government to track COVID-19 cases. The same formula of innovation, empathy and effective service delivery at the community level is just as relevant today.

Abed bhai taught us that no problem is insurmountable. He lived his life with the conviction that every person in the world deserved the opportunity to realise their potential. His ability to dream big spurred innovations that will continue to influence individuals and organisations around the world for generations to come.

Abed bhai considered himself a citizen of the world. He often repeated the words, "We must never lose sight of those who need our hands the most". BRAC played a significant role in rebuilding countries like Afghanistan through its decade-long civil wars, Nepal and Haiti after the earthquakes, and Sri Lanka after the tsunami. We continue our work in 11 countries in Africa and Asia today with the same ethos our founder stood for - to understand different realities, to constantly learn and adapt to respond to changing needs and to stand beside those in the most vulnerable situations.

In Abed bhai's memory, on his birthday anniversary, we will wake and we will continue to work, with the same courage, empathy and compassion that he instilled in us, and we will continue to strive for a better world.

Thank you for being with us along the way.

“Close your eyes for five minutes. Imagine flying like a bird.”

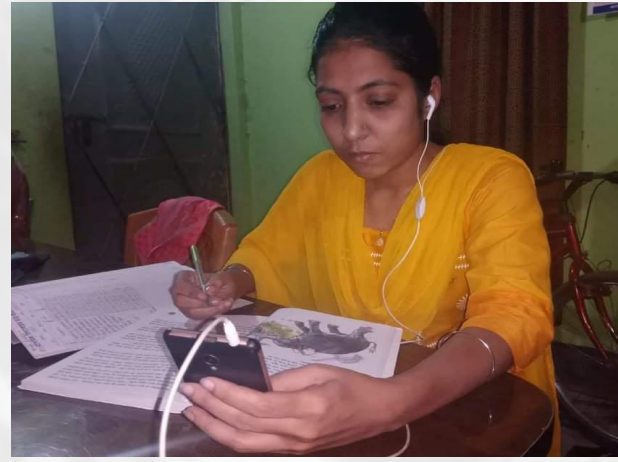
Sharmin Akter, a teacher of BRAC's primary school in Chattogram, southeastern Bangladesh, starts her class over a phone with four of her students.

She first focuses on their wellbeing, using psychosocial counselling activities specially designed for children to cope with anxieties arising from the pandemic.

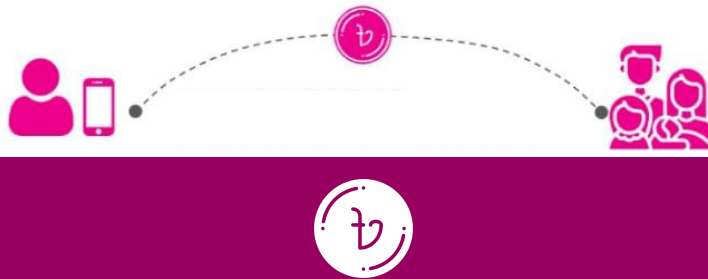
With educational institutions closed across Bangladesh, students of 50 BRAC schools are continuing classes through mobile phones. Sharmin plans each class around the timing of the parents, since the phones used for the classes are usually kept by the fathers of the students.

During the lockdown, many of the students in her class, especially boys, were helping their families in the field with farming. The girls were helping with housework. Sharmin's classes over the phone are gradually bringing students back into learning routines.

BRAC is committed to ensuring that no child is deprived of their right to education. These classes, conducted twice a week, will be scaled up to more than 74,000 students of Class 5 in the coming week. Eventually we will cover classes for the pre-primary students of 24,600 BRAC schools across Bangladesh.



Raised: BDT27M



Goal: BDT200M

BDT 27 million has been raised through BRAC's appeal to help those in the most vulnerable situations in Bangladesh. Much more is needed.

Support a family today: <https://www.brac.net/covid19/donate/>

Partners



Global Affairs
Canada



Contact us at covid19response@brac.net