



COVID-19: SITUATION REPORT

13 APRIL 2020



18.8M

programme participants oriented on COVID-19



100,000

workers on the ground covering 64 districts



876,000

items of protective wear distributed



1.2M

hygiene products distributed



99,450

families received cash support

Make empathy go viral: Urgent appeal

BRAC has almost completed supporting 100,000 families living on low incomes with the means to buy essential items for the next two weeks.

Now, we need you.

Please stand beside those in most need: <https://www.brac.net/covid19/donate/>

BRAC will ensure your support reaches those who need it the most.



BRAC has reached **99,450** out of a targeted **100,000** families with cash support



But much more is needed. Donate now.

STORIES FROM THE GROUND

It is harvest season now. I always have work during this time, but this year is different.

People have come back from the cities to their villages. Many of them are men who used to work as day labourers. Now women like us are left with no work.

I am the sole provider of my family. My husband has been sick for two years. He cannot work even if he wants to. I have no money to buy his medicine. I have no food at home. I cannot even go to people's houses to ask for work now. Everyone has been asked to stay indoors.

I was sure that I would die - either from COVID-19 or hunger.

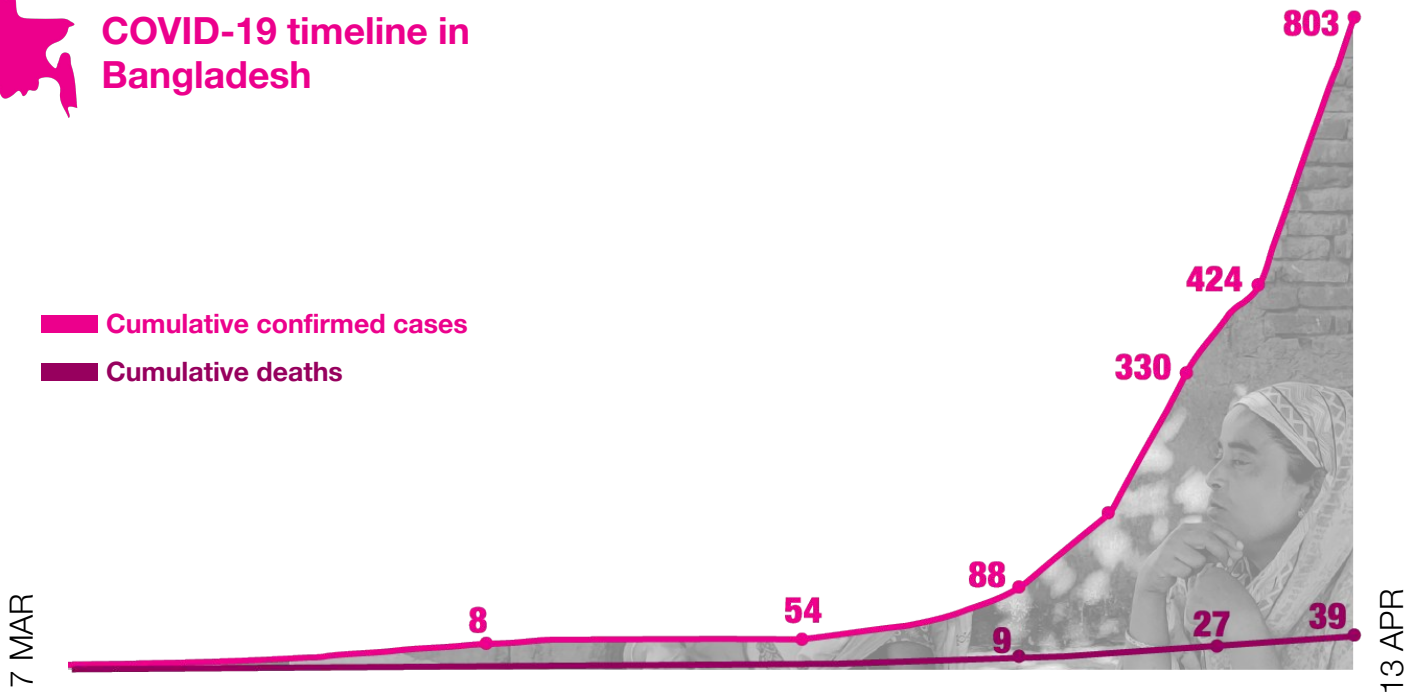
This money will help us survive a little longer.

Fuljan lives in Tetutlia. A village of the Poba sub-district of Rajshahi. The story was written by Md Anwar Hossain, regional manager of BRAC's ultra-poor graduation programme.



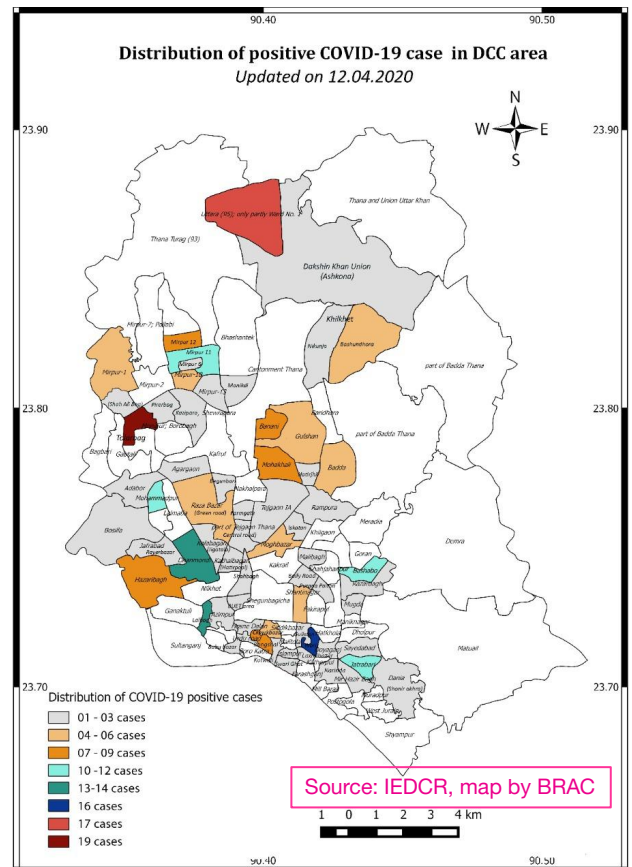


COVID-19 timeline in Bangladesh



Situation overview

- There are **1,773,086 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally**. 111,652 lives have been claimed across 213 countries, areas or territories (updated: 13 April 2020, 06:00 GMT+6, [World Health Organisation](#)).
- There has been a spike in reported cases in **Bangladesh**; there are currently 803 confirmed cases as of 13 April 2020. 182 of these cases were identified in the last 24 hours. The government’s Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) have confirmed 39 deaths to date. Five of the deaths were confirmed in the last 24 hours.
- The Government of Bangladesh has [extended the ongoing general leave](#) (including for workers in ready made garments factories) until 25 April 2020. The government is also not allowing people to leave their homes [after 6pm](#).
- The government has formed [committees at the upazila-level \(sub-district\)](#), including women participants, to manage funerals and track the spread of COVID-19 within their areas.
- A total of **320 COVID-19 testing booths are to be set up across the country** in efforts to decentralise and quicken testing. Following the South Korean model to test, track and trace, Bangladesh’s Directorate General of Health Services, with support from NGO partners, launched [44 walk-in testing booths](#) on 13 April. Eight of these are in Dhaka, eight are in Narayanganj and the rest are situated in other divisions.
- **62% of people diagnosed with COVID-19 in Bangladesh are between the age of 21-50**, according to [statistics](#) shared by IEDCR.
- In a welcome move, the Prime Minister has declared a number of packages and incentives. A much-needed stimulus package of [BDT 50 billion has been allocated to support farmers](#) through the economic shutdown, as [farmers are suffering large losses](#) this season. The fund will be disbursed to small and medium-scale farmers in rural areas, including poultry and dairy, at a 4% interest rate. There will also be BDT 1 billion in special honorarium for health workers who have been directly involved in the treatment of COVID-19 patients, as well as several insurance arrangements available.





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 supplying doctors to IEDCR's dedicated public hotlines, supplying field support teams at the community level, creating public resources on how to correctly use PPE, providing insights to a2i (a key wing within the ICT ministry) on where communication gaps exist, and sourcing ventilators and beds for under-resourced hospitals.

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 ground, and are distributed to 100,000 people who live in extreme poverty.

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

- **According to Bangladesh Doctors Foundation, at least 29 health professionals have been infected with COVID-19.** There is still a lack of protective wear that meets the required standards for healthcare providers. Many doctors are refusing to treat COVID-19 patients and some have now been **suspended** for their lack of responsibility and duty.
- **Pohela Boishakh**, probably the largest cultural festival in the country, is one of the most important annual occasions for **artisans**. Most large investors have already built significant inventory and will now face huge losses. Small investors and individual craftsmen are eyeing a long, lean season before they will have orders from customers. An additional upcoming risk is that they may also lose out on the *Eid-ul-Fitr* festival, the largest religious festival of the country. If this happens, it will take years before people recover.
- **There are an increasing number of cases across the country where patients who have tested positive and been ordered to stay in quarantine have fled their residences in fear of retribution or ostracisation.**
- **Cox's Bazar authorities have restricted all movements within camps and host communities.** BRAC field volunteers continue to deliver COVID-19 preventive messages over phones and have received mobile balance to sustain this crucial activity. The volunteers have reported cases of domestic violence which are being referred for case management.
- **Bangladeshi nationals working in Middle Eastern countries are at risk of losing their jobs amidst the crisis.** The Government of Bangladesh is in conversation with the employing nations to secure their job security and extend leave and visa validity in an effort to sustain the remittance that these workers earn for the country. Remittances from family members working abroad are also a major source of income for many people living in rural areas across Bangladesh.
- **Mid to long term shocks can deplete productive assets and have a long-term impact on national productivity.** Farm owners have been unable to sell their animals and are destroying day-old chicks, which will create a supply shock to the poultry industry in the mid-term. Similarly, dairy owners could not earn enough to feed their cattle and are having to sell their cows, which will create mid-term supply shock in dairy/milk. This is also the case for fish farms.

- **There have been multiple media reports of snatching of relief materials by angry community members when relief was not being distributed quickly and many people were hungry.** There have now been a number of media reports concerning misappropriate and mishandling. The Prime Minister has instructed district commissioners to make a list of people who do not have homes. A committee has been formed to review the system of allocation and distribution.
- **Bangladesh is entering dengue season.** Water puddles easily form in empty spaces, so there is a lot of breeding grounds for mosquitoes in Dhaka. If this is not urgently addressed, another public health crisis could further ravage the country.



Orientation, safety and safeguarding of staff and communities

- **86 million** people have been reached through social media with COVID-19 awareness messages.
- **18.8 million** programme participants across the country have been oriented on COVID-19, including 226,907 persons with disabilities.
- **4.3 million** voice messages with preventive information on COVID-19 have been sent to microfinance clients.
- **1.2 million** hygiene products have been distributed to staff and communities.
- **133,509** BRAC staff have been oriented on COVID-19 through BRAC's online orientation sessions with healthcare experts and training modules.



Strengthening of systems

- **BRAC is working with a2i, the Directorate General of Health Services, Community-based Health Care and UN agencies** to support the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to reduce the burden on hospitalisation (as mild to moderate cases can be monitored at home) and reduce the chances of community level outbreak. BRAC's network of 50,000 community health workers will support the verification of clusters of COVID-19 through door-to-door visits, contact tracing of suspected cases, providing guidance on home quarantine and distributing essential medical packages for supportive treatment.
- **All 41 of BRAC's maternity centres are staying open during the lockdown** to provide maternity healthcare and normal delivery services to pregnant mothers.
- **11 lab technicians of BRAC's TB control programme** in Lakshmipur, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Bhola, Patuakhali, Khulna, Narail and Chattogram have been included in the Government's response team to collect samples from suspected COVID-19 cases in those regions.
- **15 organisations have now contributed to BRAC's urban slum map.** It is hoped that the map will help individuals and organisations understand who is in the most need, coordinate relief efforts and avoid duplication in distribution: <http://urbanslummap.brac.net/>



Partnerships

- **Australian Government's Department for Foreign Affairs (DFAT) and BRAC have entered their third phase of partnership in combating COVID-19 in Bangladesh.** This new phase aims to reduce the risks of COVID-19 through food assistance and enable better assessment of the situation in Bangladesh. The two partners have already been delivering food support, and have set up a distance learning platform for students through live television broadcasts. BRAC will collectively support more than 33,000 households during these three phases.
- **Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and UNHCR** are providing support for the COVID-19 response in Cox's Bazar, under the humanitarian crisis management programme (HCMP), for both the Rohingya and host communities. **UNICEF** is also supporting the humanitarian crisis management programme, with a particular focus on ensuring well-being and learning of children.

How Bangladesh is continuing education in a pandemic

COVID-19 has forced large-scale closures of schools across the world. More than 90% of students worldwide are now cut off from a face-to-face classroom education.

Educational institutions across Bangladesh have been closed since March 16 to minimise the risk of infection. Learning has been disrupted for some 30 million students across the country.

BRAC is committed to ensuring that no child is deprived of their right to education, through:

- **Supporting the government's TV school initiatives for students in primary and secondary schools, by designing content and lessons and grooming teachers**
- **Piloting and scaling remote learning through basic phones for students in BRAC schools**
- **Raising awareness on COVID-19, safe physical distancing and lockdowns, as well as focusing on students' wellbeing**

Supporting the government's TV school initiatives

BRAC is committed to supporting the government in ensuring that learning continues in Bangladesh during COVID-19. BRAC has been working closely with the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education to support broadcasting primary and secondary school classes on TV. BRAC, among other organisations, have contributed to developing lesson plans and content, and provided resource trainers to conduct classes and groom teachers. BEP is closely observing the effectiveness of the programme to further inform the national strategy.

Piloting and scaling remote learning through basic phones across BRAC schools

BRAC has been testing the idea of conducting classes through basic phones. On a trial basis, teachers of our non-formal schools in four areas in Bangladesh have been conducting classes in group calls of 3-4 children with their parents. These virtual classes, conducted twice a week, will be scaled up to more than 74,000 students of Class 5 from next week. Eventually we will cover classes for pre-primary students of 24,600 schools across Bangladesh.

The first three days of classes will focus specifically on psychosocial counselling and well-being. The third and fourth day will focus on revisioning lessons from before their schools closed. After the first week, lessons will continue as per their curriculum. Every sixth day of classes will consist of a special class, with customised timings decided by the teacher, for students with disabilities, especially those who are hearing impaired, those who are weaker students or have missed classes.

Teachers of BRAC Academy, a fee-based school in Cumilla, have been conducting classes from Nursery to Class 2 through telephones. 94 students are attending classes with their teachers through telephones. After creating a custom routine to call twice a week, parents and teachers work together to deliver abridged lesson plans to children to keep the flow of education running. The subjects include Math, Bangla, and English, with Story Time and Drawing for extracurricular activities.

Raising awareness on COVID-19 and ensuring students' wellbeing

As more areas in Bangladesh come under lockdown, it is important to ensure that children have proper information and feel safe and supported as their families face disruptions and the stress of economic hardship.

Teachers are trained to start discussions with students about how they and their family are coping with the sudden changes caused by the shutdown due to COVID-19. All classes will end with discussions about hygiene practices and awareness of COVID-19 precautions. Teachers will remind students of the importance of staying clean to avoid being infected or spreading the disease, and instruct students to wash their hands using the proper technique. Teachers will also explain the need for safe physical distancing, and describe to them what a lockdown means, giving them a sense of reassurance and security, so that they are not afraid or stressed during this crisis.

BRAC Education Programme has been working with BRAC's social innovation lab, BRAC University Institute of Educational Development and national experts in education, in designing initiatives and measuring effectiveness. Amidst an extremely fluid situation, BRAC is focusing on remaining adaptive and agile, and keeping pace with changing needs.

Our experience in providing education for the last 45 years has shown us that children often become ambassadors to their families and the wider community by advocating their learnings outside classrooms. We are continuing to revise our approaches in a way that equips our students to help their families be informed and safe in the face of the pandemic.



BRAC voice in global media

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World vs Virus: No Refuge: The world's most vulnerable

Asif Saleh, Executive Director of BRAC, talks on the latest episode of World vs Virus, a weekly podcast breaking down the latest news, research, and analysis of the COVID-19 coronavirus, brought to you by the World Economic Forum.

BRAC Blog

Meeting basic needs of the world's poorest during a crisis: Part I

by Rozina Haque and Upoma Mahbub, programme head and advocacy manager of BRAC Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme

Meeting Health Needs of the World's Poorest During a Time of Crisis: Part II

by Julie Kedroske, Dristy Shrestha, and Bobby Irven, Technical Advisors and Communications Officer of BRAC's Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative

STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINE



Many century-old beliefs and superstitions prevail in the *haor* (wetlands) areas. These remote regions in Bangladesh remain inundated for half of the year and three out of 10 people live in extreme poverty.

It has been very challenging to make communities here understand the seriousness of the pandemic. They live in such isolation that information is not easily accessible for them. I have been following BRAC's instructions from the start of the pandemic and sharing awareness messages on how to prevent and protect from COVID-19 with the communities I work with.

It has been extremely difficult for families in indigenous communities and those living in extreme poverty. Many have no source of income right now.

I have taken part in the cash distribution for food security for such families in the region. I feel proud as an individual that I am being able to contribute to improving the lives of my people during this crisis.

Ashik Rahman, programme organiser of BRAC's integrated development programme, at Baniachong district of Habiganj in Sylhet, northeastern Bangladesh.



Partners



Global Affairs
Canada



Contact us at covid19response@brac.net