



Press release

April 06, 2021

World Health Day

BRAC community support team in the field: Helping communities build covid-19 resilience

Over 12 lakh households in seven districts received covid-19 prevention messages

As the number of people tested positive continues to grow, government and private hospitals in Bangladesh are struggling every day to cope with the exponential rise in coronavirus cases.

In a situation where resources are limited and healthcare facilities are under-equipped, it is now essential to develop the existing facilities so that emergency healthcare can be provided continuously. Right at this moment, it is also crucial to involve the community members to spread the awareness messages on covid-19 transmission to every home.

In the present context of upsurge in the covid-19 transmission, BRAC has stepped up its community-driven response to deliver essential healthcare services to those most vulnerable in an uninterrupted manner.

“BRAC will create community resilience to prevent transmission, improve home management and facilitate testing, taking other stakeholders alongside in the hotspots,” said Morseda Chowdhury, associate director, BRAC’s Health, Nutrition and Population Programme (HNPP). Referring to the economic hardship novel coronavirus has brought upon particularly the low and lower-middle income people, she said that hardware support in terms of cash or kind nudges behavioural improvements.

Currently, community support teams formed under the HNPP are operating in six districts putting the communities at the front and centre of the mitigation strategy. Funded by UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the project titled “COVID-19 response through community mobilisation and strengthening of community clinics” is operating in 51 upazilas in Bagerhat, Bhola, Sherpur, Narayanganj, Kishoreganj and Bogra districts.

Under a separate project, BRAC community support teams are offering health messages for behavioural change of its programme participants in two upazilas in Gazipur. Implemented with its own funding since September 2020, the initiative titled “Community-based Covid-19 response project” offers services in Kaliganj and Kaptai upazilas of Gazipur.

In the project being implemented in the first six districts, community support teams, each with two community health workers, are visiting door-to-door to interact with the households. Community healthcare workers of the government are also involved in the process. The teams offer healthcare service messages, including maternal and child healthcare service packages. The teams try to find out if any families have members with covid-19 symptoms and refer them to upazila health complex, if found any.

BRAC has also taken initiative to form COVID-19 prevention committees having both influential figures and common people from the localities as members, all of whom actively engage in sensitising people on coronavirus prevention through awareness messages.

To ensure treatment of suspected or covid-19 patients, BRAC is also offering training and logistic support to the local family planning centres and community clinics.

So far, 27,000 covid-19 suspects have been identified in these 51 upazilas. These committees along with BRAC's community support teams are relentlessly spreading awareness messages on health and hygiene, including those to prevent coronavirus to 12 lakh households in this area. They also distributed 12 lakh masks and installed 50,000 hand washing stations in these upazilas.

On the other hand, the project being implemented in two upazilas of Gazipur aims to raise awareness of the community to minimise covid-19 transmission in the Kaliganj and Kapasia upazilas and refer patients with symptoms to the nearest healthcare centres.

The teams are monitoring public behaviour in four particular places of public gathering, namely, markets, bus stands, mosques and salons in these two upazilas. They observe if the individuals maintain particular preventive and cautionary measures and whether necessary preventive measures are in place. In the markets, for example, they observe if there are separate paths for entry and exit, whether there are adequate hand washing facilities and if buyers and sellers are wearing masks.

At the bus stands the teams monitor if passengers, staff and others maintain social distancing and wear masks and check for sufficient hand washing facility and other necessary hygiene practices. They also check whether or not disinfectants are sprayed in the transports regularly. In the mosques, BRAC teams monitor proper wearing of masks, carrying their own prayer mats and maintaining social distancing by the people congregating for prayers.

At the salons, proper wearing of masks by both the clients and service providers, keeping standard three feet distance in the seating arrangement and display of covid-19 awareness slogans at the entrances are checked by the teams.

In these two upazilas, 160 community corona protection committees comprising 1,159 members, including local leaders and influential and general people are actively engaged in spreading covid-19 awareness messages.

The teams visit households to check covid-19 suspects in households and circulate information on mitigation strategies to the families. They also refer covid-19 suspects to healthcare centres, while arrange for telecounseling services by expert medical professionals.

As of March 2021, a total of 3,812 people were identified as covid-19 suspects, 1,756 of whom were tested covid-19 positive later in Gazipur. All of them received telemedicine and other services.

As part of the campaign, 78,000 masks were distributed which covered 60% of the households in the two upazilas. Besides, BRAC teams disseminate messages using loudspeakers and through distribution of different awareness materials in the localities.

In between March 2020 and February 2021, BRAC provided Covid-19 prevention information to 37.56 million households and has conducted 13,985 safe deliveries at BRAC maternity centres. So far, BRAC has trained and deployed 659 Community Support Team (CST) members under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and 773 CST members under Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC). In addition, BRAC community health workers supported government teams to track cases and refer cases to national facilities.

With regards
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