



## INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

# Ensuring Boro Crop Security and Health Safety of Harvesters in Bangladesh



**05** Haor Upazila under **04** districts (Kishorgenj, Netrokona, Sunamganj, Habiganj) reached with the activities for haor harvesters



**01** Awareness message video by *Shykh Seraj*



**289,132** People reached by administering **218** mike with Shykh Seraj audio message



**20,739** Harvesters (Female #4,026, Male #16,713) reached through **155** hand wash spots with soaps



**44,834** household reached per day using Dish Cables with Shykh Seraj Video message



**20,10,640** people reached (30% harvesters) with Shykh Seraj audio message through **16** Community Radios



**6,854** Harvesters (Female # 2932, Male # 3922) reached with temperature screening by **52** Shasthya Karmee (SK)

### Context :

The government of Bangladesh has emphasised on the importance of increased agricultural production, and as a mitigation strategy to avoid food crisis due to COVID-19, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh has announced a stimulus package of Tk 5,000 crore for people involved in the agricultural sector. Timely harvesting of rice is one of the utmost priorities. Given that approx. 20 per cent of total rice produce comes from haor, and due to the pandemic it is observed that harvesters are currently struggling with a shortage of skilled agricultural harvesters, restrictions of mobility, lack of agricultural machinery, etc. Considering the current context of COVID 19, there is a possibility of increasing community transmission among harvesters and communities. To mitigate such circumstances in the haor region, IDP BRAC has taken some initiatives to raise awareness among harvesters working in IDP operated areas of 31 unions of 5 haor Upazilas under 4 districts (Kishorgenj, Netrakona, Habiganj, Sunamganj). Interestingly, IDP field staff claimed that female household members single-handedly accomplish 12 among 17 different tasks of whole crop harvesting process. Hence, IDP led such awareness activities benefited both male and female agricultural labourers.

### Objective:

To ensure Boro crop security and health safety of agricultural harvesters in the Haor (wetlands) region by installing hand-washing points, screening temperature and raising awareness to prevent the COVID-19.

**Time frame:** Last week of April to Mid-May'2020

### Nature of Actions:

#### Installation of hand-washing points:

155 temporary hand-washing points were established in the bank of paddy fields where targeted agricultural harvesters work. Necessary hand washing and hygiene materials were provided for better protection of the harvesters. [Click here](#) to see the visibility of hand-washing points.

## Health Screening of Boro harvesters

IDP BRAC has procured contactless infrared thermal scanners for screening the temperature of harvesters in the field. At first, the Security and Safety Department of BRAC has provided orientation on the application of the scanners to IDPs Technical Manager at Head Office level, Sector Specialists, Trainers, and Upazila Development Coordinators at field level over Google Meet. These trainees cascaded the learning to 52 Shasthya Karmees (SK's) [All female]. Each SK has received a thermal scanner for screening the temperature of harvesters before the day starts in the field. SKs have reached 266 villages by screening **6,854 harvesters ( Male- 3922 | Female- 2932)**. SK checks if the harvesters' temperature is **average between 96-99° F**. If any harvester shows **101° or above**, SK's are instructed to encourage the harvester to be isolated from others and going to local health complexes for instant check-ups.

## Awareness Messages Created by Shykh Seraj:

IDP BRAC has communicated with **Shykh Seraj**, Bangladeshi journalist, media personality and agriculture development activist, to produce a BCC material for the awareness initiative. He derived six key messages addressing crop security and different health-related issues: washing hands in a proper way, keeping the physical distance of 3 feet, refraining from putting hands on mouth, eyes or nose, and not using another person's towel or any of the clothes. [Click here](#) to see the message by Shykh Seraj.

## Loudspeaker Mike at paddy field:

For the harvesters working at the paddy fields of hard to reach areas, using mike through auto Rikshaw or van and to some cases boat is one of the most effective ways to disseminate life-saving information. IDP field offices **administered # 218 mike** and reached **289,132 people** at the last mile of haor areas. [See](#) the visibility of miking in haor.

## Video message through cable dish operators

With the assistance of local administration, BRAC IDP local branches organised broadcasting of PSA video of Shykh Seraj on the local dish channels by cable operators. Through this activity, IDP covered **44,834 households per day**.

## Audio message through Community Radios across the country

Under the Ministry of Information, Bangladesh there are total 16 community radios functioning and covering around six million people in Bangladesh. These community radio stations following Community Radio Revised Policy 2017, fall under a *Community Radio Network*. IDP has initiated a service contract with Radio Pollikontho FM 99.2 who then contracted with other 15 community radios to make harvesters aware on messages by Shykh Seraj. The broadcasting period was from 25th April to 9th May 2020, and on average 97 times a day.

Through 16 radios, the total reach to listeners with the audio messages is **2,010,640**. **Approximately 30% (603,192) of the total reach is harvesters**. The audio of Shykh Seraj broadcasted in total 1,543 times from all radio stations. **Total 35,892 SMS and Total 14,374 phone calls** received during the live segments of radios to know more information about harvesters' safety during the COVID -19 pandemic. Here are some implementation of community radio on the ground: [BRAC Palli Kantha](#), [Radio Krishi](#), [Radio Chilmari](#)

## Challenges faced during actions:

- Purchasing hand washing materials was time-consuming because nearby shops were closed due to lockdown and collecting safe water for refilling hand-washing points was difficult due to the unavailability of the nearest water sources.
- Miking was delayed for a few days due to continuous bad weather at haor.
- Since the thermal scanner was new technology for harvesters, they felt hesitant at the first place to get examine with it. It interrupted the temperature screening process at first day.
- Collecting radio audience's opinion and feedback through listeners' club meetings and visits were hampered due to the lockdown situation in all community area .



## Learning from the actions:

- Shykh Seraj is Bangladeshi journalist and agricultural activities having fame nationally and internationally. Hence, his messages had well acceptability to the harvesters.
- Audio clip through Miking was placed at the corner of paddy fields. It helped harvesters to listen to the messages which the action was purposed.
- Hand-washing points placed at the bank of the paddy field were significantly helpful for protecting labourers from viruses and germs. After 2-3 days, their behavioural changes witnessed by observing their frequent hand washing during break and lunch hours.
- Messaging through dish cables created a buzz among community people. Along with harvesters it helped people at household level to maintain individuals' towels and other daily use items clean.
- All the SKs are female. It was assumed that they won't screen temperature of unknown male harvesters. But soon after involving the community leaders, the process got smoothened. SKs were, then, able to screen temperature spontaneously after 1-2 days of action started.
- People from the radio stations understood the popularity of Shykh Seraj while broadcasting the audio messages. Because active responses were found through numbers of messages and phone calls from the listeners that revealed how much engaging the messages was for the labourers.



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