

Dear colleagues, partners and friends,

As many public health experts have feared, the situation in Bangladesh is worsening.

We are in the eleventh day of the shutdown, and the government has just announced that this will continue until at least April 14.

Movement across the country is rapidly reducing, through national-level, district-level, upazila-level, private and individual efforts. Confusion about ready-made garment factory shutdowns resulted in mass crowds of workers earlier in the week, but the government's announcement today that prayers are suspended will significantly reduce future mass gatherings in thousands of pockets across the country.

People who were already living in vulnerable situations, such as women and children and people living with disabilities, are particularly suffering.

As a small sample, 289 incidents of violence across 54 districts were recorded in six days from 26-31 March by BRAC's community empowerment programme. Detailed information is included in the report.

A small sample of 65 participants with disabilities were interviewed by BRAC's skills development programme to assess how COVID-19 is impacting them. While findings are not representative of the entire population, they shed some important light on their immediate needs. Detailed information is included in the report.

Working in close coordination with the government and community-level organisations, BRAC has now provided 51,238 families with BDT 1,500 (USD 18) as part of its emergency cash transfer project for 100,000 households that started last Thursday. This support has focused on people who were already living in vulnerable situations, and have been affected particularly hard by the shutdowns; those still living in urban areas whose economic activities have all but stopped (e.g. rickshaw pullers, owners of roadside food stalls and construction workers), people living in ultra-poverty in the host communities surrounding the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, and people living in the most remote areas of Bangladesh.

We hope to support more people by improving coordination across relief efforts through launching a relief information portal this week.

Bangladesh's health system is in urgent need of resources and safety equipment for its healthcare providers to fight COVID-19. To support, we have provided 3,770 medical supplies and protective equipment to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College & Hospital and the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases Hospital. We are continuing to look for resource gaps to extend support to other facilities. We have also launched, in collaboration with IEDCR and DGHS, a COVID-19 self-symptom checker application called Coronarodh.

Globally it is becoming increasingly evident that measures to tackle the pandemic cannot be undertaken through a one-size-fits-all approach. Solutions that are working in wealthier countries can spell disasters for countries with lower resources. I delve deeper into this in [an article, co-authored with Richard A. Cash, published in Center for Global Development](#). A version of my previous article published in Dhaka Tribune about the potential humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh was also [published by the World Economic Forum](#) this week. Last Saturday, convened by BRAC Chairperson Hossain Zillur Rahman, a group of 15 renowned Macroeconomists, Public Health professionals and NGO representatives came together to brainstorm on urgent short and mid term action points on tackling covid 19. A summary of those recommendations was released for the media on Monday afternoon through a briefing which I am attaching with the sitrep today.

Please see details on the current situation and our work in the attached [situation report](#).

ps. As I send this article of the new data from ICDCR today shows a 41 percent increase in death toll (17) and a 33 percent increase in the number of confirmed cases (164) today -- the highest jump in a single day. The testing has increased to 792 as well - highest ever recorded in a day. There are clearly a few hotspots emerging from the confirmed cases which we will talk about in the next edition.

Asif Saleh
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BRAC