

COVID19 RELIEF RESPONSE REPORT



CARITAS BANGLADESH

SMALLHOLDER ADAPTIVE FARMING AND BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (SAFBIN)

COVID 19 RESPONSE REPORT OF SAFBIN



ORGANISATION NAME : CARITAS BANGLADESH (CB)
REPORT PREPARED BY: S M ZILLUR RAHAMAN, NATIONAL COORDINATOR-
SAFBIN
DATE: JUNE 29, 2020.

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is an agricultural country where more than 80% of the population and 77% of its workforce live in rural areas. Nearly half of all of Bangladesh's workers and two-thirds in rural areas are directly employed in agriculture, and about 87% of rural households rely on agriculture for at least part of their income. The dominant food crop of Bangladesh is paddy. Paddy is planted in three seasons in a year: Aus or summer rice crop, Aman crops, and Boro. In recent years the area under Boro has expanded. Due to natural calamities, pest and disease incidences, rice cultivation is very much challenging. But this year, the challenge is much different than before.

Bangladesh was in lock-down since March 26, 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19. However, the government technically avoided the term 'lockdown' because it meant additional responsibility to arrange food and other facilities for all the citizen, which was not feasible for a small country with a population of 170 million. The government has been trying to provide food support to the people with extreme need. But the number of people who receiving support was are negligible and smaller than the number of people suffering from hunger. Most importantly, due to certain challenges, the support was not reaching to the people who were truly in need. Considering these issue, all the leaders of 24 Smallholder Farmer Committees (SHFCs) of SAFBIN under Baraigram Sub-district, have enlisted 150 names of the most vulnerable and most effected HHs and shared the list with the Union Parishad. After verifying the list, the authority has primarily selected 76 HHs and allotted 10 days food package for them.

This report gives a short summary of the initial relief response undertaken by Caritas Bangladesh when countries began locking down due to the COVID19 pandemic.

SAFBIN RESPONSE

A study was conducted on the Impact of COVID-19 in Bangladesh giving status of livelihood and economic impact of the smallholder. After the initial assessment, planning was done to support the most vulnerable with immediate food and hygiene kits for 15 days:

A. Food Assistance Package for 15 days

Item description	Unit Number	Unit cost	Total cost (BDT)
Rice	15	48	720
Pulse/Lentil	2	110	220
Oil	1	110	110
Sugar	1	60	60
Salt	1	30	30
Potato	5	20	100
Total			1,240

B. Minimum hygiene package for COVID Response (Per HH for 15 days)

Item description	Unit Number	Unit cost	Total cost (BDT)
Bathing Soap (150 g (Lax))	2	40	80
Detergent Soap (1 kg)	1	110	110
Reusable face mask (locally made)	2	110	220
Total			410
Grand Total: BDT			1,650

Considering the above mentioned food and hygiene packages SAFBIN Bangladesh distributed cash Tk.@1,650 per family. A total of Tk. 866,250 distributed among 525 SHFC families of Baraigram, Paba and Tanore sub-districts. Among 525 families 314 were SAFBIN families and 184 were neighbour families. A total of 2,625 persons were benefited where 1,838 were female and 787 were male.

The priority was given for distribution of support viz. rickshaw puller, wage labour, chronically ill, disable household, pregnant and lactated women, widow, elderly, Adivashi, smallholder farmer and unemployed. Moreover, rest of Tk. 33,750 will be given as incentives for front line fighter of COVID-19 colleagues.

Budget Plan: The approved amount will be spend for the emergency cash support for food and hygiene to the extremely poor families under SAFBIN Project working area. The package for each family will be BDT 1,650 (for food BDT 1,240 and hygiene kits support BDT 410).

GROUND STORIES

AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN FOR PADDY HARVEST

Like other sectors the COVID-19 pandemic has struck directly the agriculture sector and has created a huge crisis situation. Acute labor crisis has made the Boro cultivation difficult, especially during the harvesting period. To resolve the problem, government has decided to relax the lockdown for the agricultural labors. At Paba Sub-district, the labors traveled from the nearby districts during paddy harvest. Though the situation is different due to the pandemic, they arrived anyway. Knowing the risk of this contagious disease, the villagers arranged separate accommodation facilities for the outsiders. With the help of federation leaders, the agriculture labors were trained up to maintain personal hygiene like hand washing and maintain physical distance from each other to keep themselves safe so as their family back in home. Thankfully no such corona virus positive cases were reported so far in this area.

COMMUNITY MARKETING: A SOLUTION FOR FARMERS

The number of corona cases are climbing high day by day and so is the death toll. The country is in an unannounced lockdown situation. The educational institutions are closed, except the emergency services all the sectors like markets, offices, industries as well as the transportation systems are confined. It's now a battle between life and livelihood for the people living hand to mouth. Lot of people have lost their jobs, most of the SMEs lost their capital and a huge number of people become unemployed. Study says the smallholder farmers are among the most effected people in this country. The price of daily commodities are rising in an unbridled way. But the most unfortunate fact is that the price of the product that the SHF are producing now is gradually going down. In this situation, the SHFCs of Kumrul villages in Baraigram Sub-districts decided follow the collective approach. They took an initiative to exchange their product with each other and sell the surplus at the local market. This collective approach is not only meeting up their family nutritional needs but also saving their transportation cost. The farmers are dreaming big now. They are confident to sell their products even to the city market at higher prices.

GROUND STORIES

MAKING HANDWASH IMPORTANT DURING COVID19

SAFBIN Project has been carrying out its activities at Hujuripara Union with eight villages under Paba sub-district, district of Rajshahi since 2018. Villages are Hujuripara, Dharmohata, Ghipara, Bajitpur, Radhanagor, Sarishakuri, Karnohar and Sharmongla. There are 360 beneficiaries live there, which is male 134 and female 226. Among 360 beneficiaries, 325 Bangali, 35 aboriginal, 08 women headed family, 23 widow family, 04 divorce family and 03 disable family live there. Project beneficiaries are involved in different professions such as agriculture farmer, day laborer, auto rickshaw, auto-van etc.

The village of Sharmongla under Hujuripara Union is remote and underdeveloped village among other villages. There are 250 families live at Sharmongla village which is 854 of total population. 45 families are directly involved in SAFBIN project. At present, novel Corona virus pandemic has spread out deadly across the world even in our country. In this situation, SAFBIN Project along with Caritas Bangladesh has initiated an awareness program such as leaflet distribution, online motivation to the beneficiaries, maintain social distance, abide by the health rules by the WHO and government to tackle the situation among the beneficiaries. By the motivation of SAFBIN staff, the people of Sharmongla village under Hujuripara Union have taken initiatives to set up hand washing devices at the entry points of the village. When any people enter the village, they use hand washing and then enter the village. They maintain it by rotation by the volunteers groups. Now it has created a good environment for hygienic practice. Subsequently, all people of the village are enjoying sound health and no one is infected of Corona virus.

