Global Outbreak; ongoing COVID-19 pandemic,
Not fear, but victory in awareness

RRF keens to stand beside the people in COVID-19 Pandemic
Bangladesh Context

Coronavirus – a fast-moving virus originated in China – has spread to more than 2012 countries and already claimed more than 25 million lives. While most cases were in China, the virus which causes pneumonia-like symptoms is now spreading faster globally. As per WHO’s daily situation report, over 37,47,504 confirmed cases have been reported as of 6 May, 2020.

Amidst this global crisis, Bangladesh has been identified as one of the 25 most vulnerable countries to be affected by the fast-spreading virus; the first three patients of COVID-19 being identified on 8 March 2020. Now, we have a total of 11,719 cases with 186 deaths as of 06 May, 2020. The deadly coronavirus has wormed its way into every part of the country on the 56th day since the first case was reported claiming 186 lives.

While we await a global solution to reach us in the coming weeks, right now it's critical that we protect the health of ourselves, our loved ones and the people in our communities most at risk from the virus. And the best way to do so is by continuing to practice good hygiene. Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap is the first line of defense against diseases like COVID-19.

Food assistance to Poor Women by RRF Officials

Government “ban steps” to deal with Coronavirus

On 17 March, when Bangladesh had 8 confirmed cases, the government closed all schools. The Dhaka University and all the educational institutes were also closed for the same period. This reportedly increased tourist traffic at the beaches in Chittagong, and Cox's Bazar, counteracting the government measure. On 23 March, when Bangladesh had 33 confirmed cases, the government declared a ten-day nationwide holiday for the period 26 March–4 April, ordering all public and private offices to be closed, with exception for emergency services. People have been asked to practice social distancing and stay at home. Public transport would be limited and advice was given to avoid them. On 9 April, Bangladesh imposed a ‘complete lockdown' on the Cox's Bazar District where the majority of the Rohingya refugee camps are located. ”No entry, no exit – until the situation improves”, said the government directive, and gradually lock down imposed all across the country and nationwide holiday increased till 16 May 2020 by the government.

Corona broadly hits on livelihood in Bangladesh

Coronavirus has most devastatingly affected the livelihoods of poor people in Bangladesh. Middle-class and lower-class families are living inhumane lives, especially those who eat on a daily basis is extremely difficult to make their living. These are the things that exist now

- Only 15% of Bangladeshi workers earn more than $6 a day.
- The economic shutdown sparked by COVID-19 threatens millions of livelihoods in the country imminently.
The average income in the slums of Bangladeshi cities and among the rural poor has dropped by more than 80% since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, according to a survey report released on Friday.

A total of 63 per cent of such population, including day laborers, bhangari [plastic] workers, restaurant workers, maids, transport workers, agriculture laborers, construction and factory workers, petty businessmen, shop assistants and rickshaw pullers became economically inactive during the time,” said the survey findings.

Currently, over 3,300 slums in the capital Dhaka house around 646,000 people, mostly comprising of poor day laborers and rickshaw drivers, while more than 70% of the country's 165 million people live in rural areas. Of the total population, 20% live under the poverty line, according to government data.

40% of the poor population and 35% of the vulnerable non-poor have already reduced their food consumption to cope with the situation amid the pandemic.

It added that per capita income in the slums had dropped by 82% to 27 Bangladeshi takas ($0.32) during the survey week from 108 takas ($1.30) in February, while per-capita income among the rural poor declined by 79% to 33 takas ($0.39) from 89 takas ($1.05).

Rural Reconstruction Foundation has immediately made a move to fight against coronavirus after being reported case of COVID-19. It is currently working with the government on establishing hygiene behavior change and social safety net program initially. We have also partnered with Palli Karma-Shayak Foundation (PKSF) to raise awareness across as many platforms and to as many people as possible. Our primary task is to provide food aid to hungry people to deal with the initial crisis caused by the government declared lock-down. In the aftermath of the disaster, poor people will be helped to recover their economic status through loans. Which will keep the wheel of the country's economy moving, and will save the country from any big devastating famine.

Rural Reconstruction Foundation has already taken various steps to combat the corona epidemic. And has competed few of planned activities. Going forward, it will continue to build on the work it already does to make sure everyone, everywhere understands the value of good hygiene, specifically focusing on various cross-cutting issues to combat against Coronavirus pandemic.

Food assistance given bhy youth Volunteer of RRF Adolescent Program with their own initiative in Community

1. **Food Assistance to the Poor families:**
   As of May 06 2020, emergency food aid has already been provided to 1,500 poor families in different parts of the country who are living helplessly in the coronavirus crisis. Families have been given a package of food for a minimum of 7 days. Beside, 140 sex workers have been provided food assistance for 7 days and each of them has been given a cash grant of BDT 200.
   The aids in these food package are rice, pulses, potatoes, edible oil, soap, salt etc. The organization has already made an emergency relief fund to provide emergency food assistance to the poorest people. Organization itself and all the staff who working in the organization have contributed to make this fund. All staff have deposited 50% of their Baisakhi allowance into the COVID-19 Prevention Fund, amounting to BDT- 14,35,640. Besides, all staff will donate one day's salary for the month of April - 20, which will be amount of BDT 9,75,280. Alongside the food aid, if staff or beneficiaries of the organization or members of their families will be infected with the corona virus, their families will be donated from this fund.

2. **Donation to the Prime Minister Relief Fund**
   The Prime Minister's Relief Fund is providing various assistance to the poor to address the existing corona crisis in the country. Our organization has expressed solidarity with the actions taken by the
government in dealing with the current disaster, and has adopted a plan to implement various actions as a partner of the government. In connection with this regards, all the staff working in the organization have been donated one day's salary for the month of April-2020 of Tk. 3.07.730 to the relief fund of the Hon'ble Prime Minister. RRF has jointly done this work with its massive development partner Palli Karma-Shayak Foundation (PKSF).

3. Community Voice raising
RRF encourages people in the community to provide humanitarian assistance through their own initiatives in dealing with various disasters. As part of the organization's activities, there are about 50 adolescent clubs in the youth program. In these clubs 1500 youth volunteer work various humanitarian and social activities. These adolescent volunteers have provided food assistance to 200 poor families on their own initiative to deal with the ongoing coronavirus disaster.

4. Massive Relief and Cash grant
Following the easing of the current lockdown in the country and the response to the post-disaster crisis, RRF will provide a wide range of relief programs and cash grants to disadvantaged poor and helpless people. The Management of RRF has agreed to provide a worth of 25 million BDT (million 0.25 USD) from its own funds to conduct these charity activities.

In addition, RRF will provide worth of 710.05 million BDT (million 8.36 USD) loans to its beneficiaries to recover the shock of COVID-19 crisis under micro-credit activities as a special assignment depending on the improvement of the current situation (lifting of lockdown).

5. Awareness on Behavior Change and Hygiene practices
There is no alternative for creating personal awareness in dealing with this ongoing global epidemic. It is possible to protect oneself from the outbreak of this epidemic by following the rules of the World Health Organization. RRF is mainly trying to focus on this particular issue. And is implementing various activities to create awareness among the mass people. The activities undertaken by RRF to achieve this specific goal are as follows

- 1,53,00 Mask have been distributed to the beneficiaries of different programs of the organization.
- Hand Sanitizer and Hand Gloves have been distributed to the organization’s staff.
- To educate the people 1,50,000 leaflet have distributed to the people, where they will know how to protect own self by changing behavior and practicing hygiene.
- The campaign has been conducted in different places of the country to create awareness among the general public against corona.

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