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

**Bangladesh Context**

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. As of 30 May 2020, the total number of positive case rose to 44,608 including 610 death. This is really a big concern that the rate of COVID-19 infection is being increased rapidly and death surge sharply here in Bangladesh. It was a long 66 days, the government declared a nationwide holiday for the period 26 March–30 May 2020, ordering all public and private offices to be closed, with exception for emergency services. "No entry, no exit – until the situation improves", said the government directive, and gradually lock down imposed all across the country. Now government is going ease the lockdown situation. According to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the government has decided not to extend the ongoing shutdown caused by coronavirus pandemic beyond May 30 based on economic considerations. Everything are set to resume other than schools, colleges and universities which will remain closed till June 15, 2020.

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. During lockdown, people could not move neither work, offices, industries, factories, markets (except groceries and vegetable bazars), malls, transports: buses, trains, planes, motorized vehicles are closed. Food stuffs are available in the market but people do not have money to buy. The Bangladesh Government is giving food aid to large numbers of poorest people and cash grants BDT 2500 to 5,000,000 the poorest people through Bkash payment(on line payment)in their accounts. Especially the people of rural area is badly affected. Wage earners do not have work and no work no food too. Their suffering knows no bound. Movements from villages to villages are also self-imposed by the community people themselves due to fear of being infected by COVID 19. Their movement is limited in their own villages only.

The farmers are the most sufferers especially the small family farmers as they cannot sale their products in the market due to transport shutdown and even no buyers there. Production is bumper but no market. Many growers are obliged to sell in a very low price or even destroying their products especially vegetable as no buyers are there. Government has declared a stimulus packages of worth BDT 1000020 million (EURO 10618.12) for the farmers and different factories and industries.

The closure of educational institutions has been necessary to contain the spread of Covid-19 but it has also been very challenging for the entire education sector, from pre-primary to higher education. In fact whole education is now bottled up.

**RRF is Combating against Coronavirus**

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 completed 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.

1. Food Assistance to the Poor families:
As of 30 May 2020, emergency food aid (Relief) has already been provided to 3,200 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. 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
All the staff working in the organization have been donated one day's basic salary for the month of April-2020 of BDT 3,07,730 to the relief fund of the Hon'ble Prime Minister. The Prime Minister's Relief Fund is providing various assistance to the poor to address the existing corona crisis in the country. In connection with this regards, 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. These youth volunteers are educating their village neighbors how to sanitize their living places, how to make sanitizer and use it properly at low cost.

4. 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 own-self 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 health awareness among the mass people. The activities undertaken by RRF to achieve this specific goal are as follows
   ➢ 1,53,00 masks have been distributed to the beneficiaries of different programs of the organization.
   ➢ Hand Sanitizer and Hand Gloves have been distributed amongst the organization’s 2000 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 through 180 RRF’s branch offices to create awareness among the general public against corona.

5. Food Stuffs for Primary School Kids
In collaboration with the Directorate of Primary Education of Government, Rural Reconstruction Foundation has delivered Fortified High Energy Biscuits to 1, 89, 000 students at their homes to recover their nutrition deficiency in this pandemic situation.

6. Roadmap to combat against Covid-19 in 2020-21 FY?
➢ To recover the financial crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic, RRF will provide worth of BDT 14,500 million (equivalent to USD 171 million) soft loan to the marginal farmers, small and medium entrepreneurs at the low interest rate under microfinance activities depending on the improvement of pandemic situation.

➢ RRF will provide a worth of BDT 21.5 million (USD 0.25 million) from its own fund to the poor people living under poverty lines, marginal and moderate poor people as cash grant for food and for recovering their income generating activities under financial recovery project.

➢ RRF will try to make collaboration with different donors and development partners with a view to find the ways how to help the Covid19 victims and how to recover their livelihood, health situation, raise awareness to win the coronavirus and many others arisen issues.

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