

CORONAKOTHA

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Community feedback bulletin on Covid-19 pandemic

People asking for accurate information or verification

People are seeking accurate information or asking for verification of advice they have heard elsewhere. Common requests are for information about how to prevent Covid-19, the preventative power of Indian pennywort and whether smokers have an increased risk of being affected. People are also asking for hotline numbers and contact details for the IEDCR (Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research), the local UNO, doctors, local administration officials and local press clubs, where they feel that they will be able to get accurate information.

People are looking for ways to raise their concerns about people traveling from areas with higher rates of infection

People said that they feel anxious if someone from an area with higher numbers of Covid-19 cases – particularly Dhaka or Narayanganj – arrives in their locality. People are asking for contact numbers where they can raise complaints against those who have recently travelled from outside the local area. People are also concerned about those who have symptoms, but who are not following quarantine or lockdown rules; and said that they were looking for contact numbers to inform the authorities about these individuals. People also want to know whether confidentiality will be maintained if they raise such a complaint, and said that they were worried about being harassed by the person in question if they complain about them. People also said that they wanted information about the exact locations where infections have been reported, so that they could avoid those places in order to protect themselves.

Livelihoods are more important than staying at home to middle- and lower-income people

People who earn a daily wage say that they are facing hardship due to the extended lockdown situation. People said that not being able to go to work had a

serious effect on their earnings and that they were now looking for alternative means to raise income. People from middle-income groups also reflected that their income had reduced while prices for necessary commodities had increased. This middle-income group said that they were embarrassed to ask for help. Decreasing income was making people in middle and lower income groups resent lock down and they were more concerned about earning money than staying at home.

People in lower income groups said that their principal need was relief, since they had limited or no income. They wanted to know how and from where they could get aid and for how long they will be able to receive it. They also raised concerns about irregularities which they felt were happening while distributing aid and suggested that the presence of government officials like the UNO during aid distribution could help to stop irregularities in aid distribution. The need for aid was mentioned by middle-income groups as well although, due to embarrassment or perceived stigma connected to receiving aid, people from this group said that they would like to receive aid anonymously.

Uncertainty regarding jobs, income and food, along with the fear of becoming infected, are affecting people's mental health

People said that they were suffering from stress and anxiety and that staying at home for a long time was making them mentally depressed. People said that they wanted to know how they could overcome these problems of mental stress. Some people said that, due to this stress, men were becoming irritable which was sometimes leading them to be violent to their spouses. Some said that children were also becoming subjected to violence by their parents – principally when children's requests to go outside to play were being met with physical violence from their parents. People said that they were worried that this situation would be affecting children's mental health.

Information gaps around precautionary measures and health facilities

Along with concerns like how to wash hands properly and what kind of mask they should wear to prevent Covid-19, people asked about some other issues:

- » Whether is possible to become infected by bathing in the same pond as someone with Covid-19
- » Whether a Covid-19 patient could continue to safely breast feed her child or not
- » Not having enough money to buy soap and hand sanitiser to maintain hygiene in their families
- » Where to go for treatment if they have symptoms, connected to worries about a lack of Covid-19 treatment facilities in their local area
- » Worries about a perceived lack of available health services for other type of sickness or disease
- » Tips to help diabetic patients take care of their own health while at home, since they are struggling to stay active during the lockdown period
- » Ways to maintain nutrition during lockdown

Particular groups are worried about difficulties in maintaining distancing

People with visual disabilities said that they were concerned about not being able to maintain physical distancing from others. They said that they feared that their disability would make it more difficult to maintain physical distance and that they would therefore be infected by the virus. Farmers who are harvesting crops also said that they were concerned about the practicality of maintaining physical distancing. Because of the nature of their job, they felt that it was unlikely they would be able to maintain enough distance from other farmers. This concern was particularly raised by farmers working in haor areas in Sunamganj.

The bulletin has been produced by BBC Media Action and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, on behalf of Shongjog – the national platform for community engagement and accountability. Inputs into this edition have been drawn from feedback collected by phone, through hotlines, by SMS, through radio phone-in programmes and using social media. Feedback analysed was collected by Radio Padma (Rajshahi), Radio Sarabela (Gaibandha), Krishi Radio (Barguna), Radio Nalta (Satkhira), Radio Bikrampur (Munshigonj), Radio Meghna (Bhola), Breaking the Silence (BTS) and Voluntary Association for Rural Development (VARD).

BBC Media Action (in cooperation with Translators without Borders) is also producing the regular *What Matters?* bulletin, which analyses community feedback and concerns in Cox's Bazar, related to Covid-19 in the context of the Rohingya emergency. These bulletins can be found on the [Shongjog website](#).