

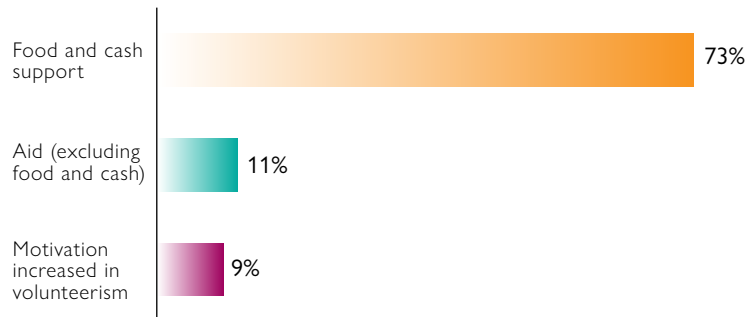
CORONAKOTHA

Issue 04 June 23, 2020
Community feedback bulletin on Covid-19 pandemic

Demand for cash and food support has increased

Many people report having lost their jobs and having no income, because of Covid-19 related restrictions, and are now struggling with their day to day expenses. Therefore, people's demand for cash support and basic food items has increased. Most people mentioned their concerns regarding food and cash support.

Top three identified needs and concerns from the community during lockdown [Base: 131]



Source: BDRCS collected feedback and complaints through hotline, feedback email, Facebook live and in-depth interviews. This feedback was collected from people in 37 districts in the last two months (April and May 2020). 72% of feedback came from men; and all of those giving feedback were aged 18+.

**Concerns not related to cash or food included: disinfection support, deprivation in aid distribution, idea submission on food shortage prevention, individual donation, response mechanism during Covid-19.*

People said that they wanted cash support because cash would give them the flexibility to spend according to their needs and priorities. People also said that digital cash transfer would be better as it would involve less risk than standing in a queue and physically collecting aid. When it comes to basic food items, people say that they need rice, oil, sugar, salt, and flour.



After lockdown, livelihood is a concern for lower- and middle-income people

Community feedback suggests that small business owners are facing difficulties in running their business following the easing of the lockdown. Small shop owners said that the buyers and sellers were failing to maintain social distancing because of the small space inside their shops. They said that this sometimes caused problems between the customers who wanted to maintain safety precautions and those who were indifferent about it. As a result, some shop owners said that they were losing their regular customers.

In Rangpur, which is declared as a 'red zone', some entrepreneurs said that they were afraid to invest money and employ day labourers because of the uncertainty around the situation.

Day labourers reflected that they had sold assets, such as cattle, in order to survive during the period when they did not have any income or receive any aid. They now say that the situation has not changed very much, even after the lockdown was eased. Day labourers say that they do not see much hope because they are not getting work and there is no alternative way for them to earn money. They reflect that they are becoming poorer day by day.



People say they are confused about the recent declaration of 'red zones'

People said that they were confused about the idea of 'red zones' and wanted to know the reasons that they had been designated. People also wanted to know how long the 'red zones' might last. Some people said that they thought these decisions had been made in order to restrict people's movement, but feared that this might not be an effective method. People felt that it would be quite difficult to lockdown an entire upazila, because of multiple entry and exit points which could be very difficult to control. People from areas with fewer infections wanted to know whether their upazilla would be declared as a 'red zone' area or not and whether, if their upazila became a 'red zone' in the future, the government would impose another lockdown. Both lower and middle-income groups showed their concerns about imposing another lockdown and wanted to know how long it would last, if it was imposed. People said that they were worried about it because they felt it would impact their earnings and livelihoods.



People are concerned about affordability and quality of masks

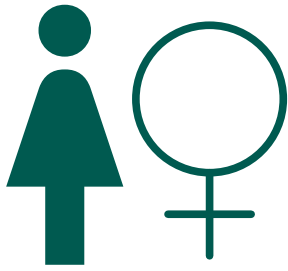
Recent government announcements that fines will be imposed for not wearing masks have made people worried. People said that they did not have money to buy masks. People from rural areas in Thakurgaon mentioned that, earlier on in the pandemic, different NGOs were providing support including masks and gloves but that support has been decreasing over the time. Community feedback also suggests that people are worried about how to follow the government instruction. People said that they wanted to know how many times a single mask could be used, how to wash it and how many days one mask can be used for. Young people living in rural areas in Barguna expressed their concern about the quality of the masks that they usually used. From what they had seen on social media and television, they felt that N95 masks were safer, but were beyond their affordability. They said that, in their area, they were using masks made from t-shirt fabric and wanted to know if such masks were safe to use.



Asymptomatic transmission of Covid-19 is another concern

In Chapainawabganj, which is currently a less infected area, people from lower income groups said that they had heard from those who were infected that, although they had tested positive for Covid-19, they did not have any symptoms. This has created confusion in that area. Some people said that they believed that, since infected people were not showing any symptoms, it was likely that everyone in the area had Covid-19 but that people with good immune system were not showing symptoms. Some people believed that people who had tested positive without any symptoms were not actually infected with Covid-19, because symptoms like fever, cold and breathing problems were always present in someone with a Covid-19 infection.

People with disabilities from Barisal expressed their concerns about the number of Covid-19 tests. They said that they felt the number of tests should be increased because, without testing, it was not possible to identify those people who were infected but not showing any symptoms. They also said they were worried about the lack of Covid-19 testing facilities in Barisal.



Concerns from women

Women said that they were concerned about their husbands going outside of the house to hangout in the bazars. They said that their husbands went to socialise and that they could therefore bring the infection back home. According to feedback from women, they fear that their husbands would beat them if they raised the issue. Women wanted to know what they could do to stop their husbands from going out.

Women with jobs had queries about whether the virus could be spread through hair. They said that they were worried about this issue since they themselves have long hair. They also wanted to know how to maintain social distance on public transport on the way to work. Women also wanted to know how to wash fish, meat and vegetables which are bought from the market.

Mothers asked about when the government would lift the ban on social gatherings so that they could marry off their daughters. Mothers of newly-married girls wanted to know whether they could send their daughters to the groom's house.

Rumours and misinformation

Food related rumours



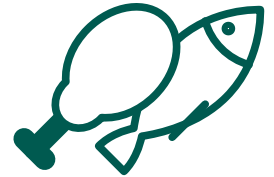
One rumour circulating in Barguna is that tilapia fish and farmed chicken cannot be eaten during this time because people could be infected by Covid-19 if those items were eaten. As a result of this, many people say they have stopped buying chicken; and the chicken price has gone down to BDT 60 per kg.



Fact check: Rumours about tilapia fish started spreading on social media in March 2020 through an online portal. This news has been re-published under a distorted headline, based on a report published in the daily Prothom Alo about three years ago. Although the historic headline mentioned the risk of a virus spreading from tilapia fish, there is no mention of 'coronavirus' anywhere in the report. Rather, the virus that has been mentioned is called "Tilapia lake".

Rumours about broiler chickens started on social media in Mumbai in February 2020. Later, a news report together with photos of diseased chicken under the headline "chicken infected from coronavirus found in Bangalore" spread on social media. A press release issued by the veterinary wing of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), who oversees Hyderabad, stated that "In India, there is not a single case of any bird being found positive with Coronavirus. The photos circulated on social media are of birds which are affected by Ranikhet disease (This disease is known as a contagious and highly fatal disease for chicken.) Rumours surrounding coronavirus are heavily affecting the poultry and meat industry."

According to WHO, in outbreak areas, meat products can be safely consumed if these items are cooked thoroughly and properly handled during food preparation. The FAO has advised that fish and fish products are safe to eat, since coronavirus cannot infect aquatic animals. People buying fish and meat should take precautions while shopping – including keeping at least 3 feet distance from others while shopping; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; and washing hands thoroughly when arriving home and after handling and storing purchased products.



❌ Another rumour has spread in Barisal, originating from the Hindu community, that after waking up early in the morning without talking to anyone, people should walk a few steps outside of their house and dig into the ground. If any coal or coal-like object is found under the soil, it should be eaten to aid protection against being infected by coronavirus.

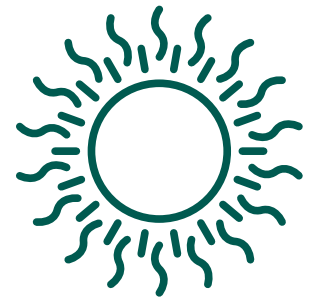
✅ **Fact check:** While some western, traditional or home remedies may provide comfort and alleviate the symptoms of Covid-19, there is no evidence that coal or coal like object can prevent or cure the disease. WHO does not recommend self-medication with any medicines, including antibiotics, as a prevention or cure for Covid-19. However, there are several ongoing clinical trials that include both western and traditional medicines.

Heat related rumours

❌ A group of day labourers and farmers in Barguna said that they believed they would not be infected by the coronavirus if they were working in the fields under the sun. They felt that the virus was mainly killing those who stay at home and that they had a stronger immune system than people who lived in urban areas. People said that they had heard from the television that exposure to sunlight for half an hour every day was beneficial for health and that, since they stay in the sun all day and work hard, they would be safe. People also said that they had not heard about any case of a poor person dying from Covid-19 yet.

Another rumour spreading among people in Gaibandha is that coronavirus will die in the heat, as Gaibandha is a district in northern Bangladesh and the temperature in summer is comparatively higher there.

✅ **Fact check:** Exposing yourself to the sun or to high temperatures does not prevent Covid-19. People can get affected by Covid-19 no matter how sunny or hot the weather is. Many countries with hot weather have reported cases of Covid-19. To protect yourself, make sure you clean your hands frequently and thoroughly and avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.



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. Insights in this edition have been drawn from feedback collected by volunteers, hotlines, phone interviews, face to face communication and meetings. Feedback analysed was collected by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Eco-Social Development Organisation (Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh and Nilphamari), Krishi Radio (Amtoli, Barguna), Radio Mahananda (Chapainawabgonj), Bangladesh Protibandhi Unnayan Sangstha (Barishal) and Breaking the Silence (Dhaka, Satkhira, Srimongol).

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](#).