

Recent floods in some districts have further aggravated people's problems



People from Kurigram and Sunamganj preferred to stay at home rather than going to shelters, afraid that they would not be able to maintain social distance...

Community feedback suggests that people's livelihood and food related problems, which were already serious because of the lockdown, have been made worse by recent flooding. People from Gaibandha said that the vegetables they had planted in their fields were one of their major sources of income; and that having home-grown supplies for domestic consumptions usually reduced their food costs significantly. Flooding has heavily damaged these plants as most of the fields were submerged, according to feedback received. Vegetable farmers and their families said they were worried about future because they were struggling to see how they could afford to meet the cost of their daily necessities and food. In Kurigram, women from female headed households wanted to know how they could get food relief during the current flood situation, as they did not have any earnings. According to them, during this time of the year they would usually have earned money by working as helping hands in different households. But because of the flooding, no one was currently willing to hire them.

Community feedback from Kurigram also suggests that violence against women has increased in the flood-affected areas. Women said that their husbands were always annoyed because they had lost their income; and that when wives asked for food and other necessary things for the household and the children, husbands would react violently and physically abuse them in many cases.

Feedback also suggests that tube wells in the flood-affected areas had been submerged and that people were facing difficulty in accessing safe drinking water. Some women also shared that, as the tube wells were not usable, it had become significantly more difficult for them and their children to wash their hands regularly, in order to keep their family clean and safe. People said that they were anxious that their children would be at higher risk of being affected by coronavirus due to lack of cleanliness. Women were also concerned about the possibilities that their children would catch a cold or fever from the flood water.

People from Kurigram and Sunamganj expressed their concerns regarding maintaining social distance during the current flood situation. They said that they preferred to stay at home rather than going to shelters or schools (some of which have been turned into temporary shelters) because they felt that those places were crowded with different types of people. They were afraid that they would not be able to maintain social distance and could get infected by coronavirus from the people in the shelters. People also mentioned that they were failing to maintain social distancing at home due to the flood, because all the family members were living together on congested raised beds (*macha*) and asked what they could do to protect themselves from coronavirus in that situation.

People are thinking about changing their profession, while others are concerned about future livelihood

Barbers from Sunamganj said that they had used up all their savings to survive during the lockdown period while they did not have any income. Though they had opened their shops after the lockdown eased, they said that the number of customers had decreased. Consequently, they said they were not earning enough to pay rent for their houses and shops and were therefore thinking of leaving the profession and returning to their villages where they could start fish farming in their household ponds. Mango business owners from Satkhira said that they were also thinking of changing their business from next year as they could not export any mangos or make a profit this year. Shrimp business owners from the same area wanted to know when the international market would reopen so that they could start to export their products.

Farmers and daily labourers from Satkhira said they were very anxious and worried about how they would earn money and feed their families after the rainy season (August-September), as they felt that there would be fewer opportunities to work in their area because of water logging. They said that normally, during that time of year, they would go to other districts to work and earn money. They were worried because they feared that employment opportunities in other districts would be less available this year, due to the ongoing pandemic. They were also worried that it would be much more difficult to move from one district to another.

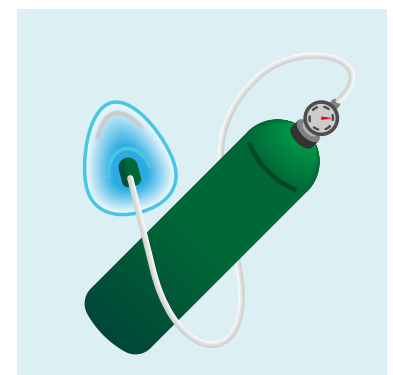
People are worried about health facilities and services

Community feedback suggests that people are concerned about lack of treatment facilities in hospitals for general and Covid-19 patients. People from Sunamganj said that the upazilla and sadar hospitals did not have enough oxygen cylinders, nebulisers and testing kits. They said that, to receive proper medical services, they had to go to Sylhet, but that the hospitals in Sylhet were not accepting people unless they were able to manage it through a personal connection. People also said that they had seen, on television, Covid-19 patients struggling to get treatment, being refused admission in many cases and having to go from hospital to hospital to find one that would admit them. People were anxious about whether they would be able to get treatment from hospitals if they needed it, or whether they would die on the road while searching for medical support.

People from Gaibandha and Satkhira mentioned that they wanted Covid-19 testing facilities at the upazilla level, so that people did not need to travel to sadar hospitals. Young people living in remote areas of Satkhira mentioned that, since boats were the only way to reach sadar, patients would have difficulties in reaching the main town to get treatment. To reduce these problems, young people said that they wanted to establish community clinics at upazilla level to help fight against coronavirus. They also wanted to learn to operate oxygen cylinders so that they could help infected people in remote areas without having to move them to sadar hospitals.

Pregnant women from Gaibandha were worried about their children's health. They said that health centres were not providing regular check-up services to pregnant women and talked about some recent incidents of people having to give birth in front of hospital gates. They said that they had heard about women who had lost their children

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due to delayed delivery and that this had made them more worried regarding their own upcoming delivery. They said that a higher body temperature during labour was common but that health centres would suspect this raised temperature as a Covid-19 symptom and would then not be willing to admit women in labour to the hospital.

Community feedback from the Dhaka metro area suggests that people are worried that they will not be able to get hospital treatment during an emergency. People said that, because of that fear, they were buying oxygen cylinders to keep in reserve at home. People with asthma patients in their families particularly wanted to know where they could buy oxygen cylinders from. Some people who had already bought oxygen cylinders wanted to know how to operate them at home. Additionally, people said that they lacked information about the nearest hospital that would collect samples for a Covid-19 test and provide reliable results. People also asked about the effectiveness of some of the medicines which they had seen were being used to treat Covid-19 patients from social media. Some people from Dhaka urban areas said they were looking for contact information for blood banks in their area while others were looking for blood plasma for Covid-19 patients.

Mental condition of children has become another concern for parents

Community feedback suggests that parents are concerned about their children's mental condition. Parents living in urban areas of Gaibandha and Sunamganj said that, during lockdown, children had passed their time watching television, drawing and singing but that, over time, they had lost interest in those things. According to feedback from parents, children who were studying in class seven or below wanted to be at school with their friends, but were unable to do this due to the coronavirus situation. Parents mentioned that children used to play in the fields in the afternoon, after school but that, due to the lockdown, they hadn't been able to do so in the last four months. Parents feared that this lack of entertainment and social contact was affecting the mental state of their children. According to the parents, children were becoming more stubborn and were nagging about different issues like visiting restaurants or getting their favourite foods. Parents living in rural areas expressed their concerns that their children were not able to go to school and were falling behind academically. Scarcity of food for children was another concern expressed by rural parents, who said that sometimes children would misbehave because of insufficient food or not getting the food of their choice.



Issues related to cash support remain a major concern in Dhaka urban areas due to increase uncertainty or risks in various occupations

People from urban Dhaka mainly dependent on daily income and small business said they needed cash support to meet their daily living costs. A significant number of vulnerable people (such as barbers, butchers, beggars, people from the third gender community, rickshaw pullers, daily labourers and small business traders) said that they had been enlisted through bKash accounts for digital cash support. Yet they were worried about when they would get the cash support. Some people perceived that they were eligible to be enlisted but had not yet been able to enrol for cash support. People also mentioned that as they are jobless at this moment, they need relief in the interim period to survive.



Concerns from women with disabilities in Cumilla

Pregnant women with disabilities from Cumilla shared that they were facing difficulties in getting an ANC card which they could use to get free services like regular check-ups and C-sections. They said that staff who were responsible for providing ANC cards were busy with Covid-19 work, and that this was making things difficult for pregnant women.

Women with disabilities who took contraceptive injections as a family planning method expressed their concerns regarding the unavailability of these injections. They said that, due to the current pandemic, hospitals had been converted into isolation centres and were busy providing emergency services to Covid-19 patients, as the number of patients had increased in the area.

Adolescent girls with disabilities were concerned about their menstrual hygiene and obtaining sanitary napkins. They said that, due to lack of money, their mothers could not buy sanitary napkins for them and had suggested that they use cloths instead.



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](#).

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 BDRCS, VARD (Sylhet), UTTARAN (Khulna), Dhaka Ahsania Mission (Dhaka), Radio Sarabela (Gaibandha), Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (Cumilla), Agradut Protibondhi Unnayan Sonchay O Rindan Somobai Somity Ltd (Mymensingh) and AFAD (Kurigram).