

## Buying hygiene products and maintaining hygiene is a big concern



Community feedback from Sitakunda, Kurigram and Bagerhat suggests that people were worried about hygiene products such as masks, soap and hand sanitiser. People from Kurigram and Bagerhat said that some people from their area had received these hygiene products for free through NGOs, but others were left out. People wanted to know how they could get masks, soap and hand sanitiser for free, as they could not afford them by themselves. Feedback suggests that people wanted to know whether the government would provide any hygiene kits or not. Some people said that use of soap had increased because of frequent hand washing during the pandemic and that buying soap had become a financial burden for them.

Poorer people and farmers from Kurigram mentioned that they did not want to pay for masks from their pockets, as a single mask cost BDT 15 – the same as 1kg of potatoes. Young people were found to be worried about their fathers working outside or in the crop fields, and wanted to know where they could get free hygiene products from.

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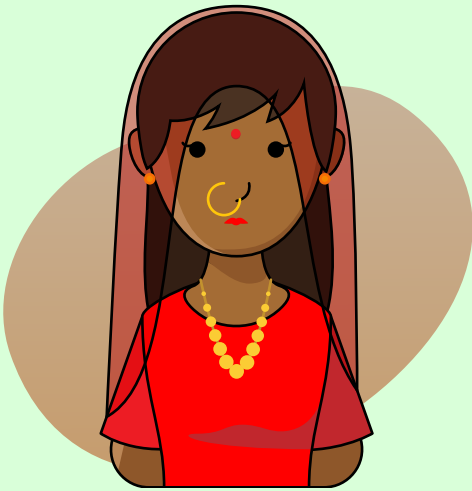
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People from Bogura were also worried about cleanliness, which they said had become harder to maintain because of flooding. They wanted to know what they could do to keep themselves clean during the flood, noting that cleanliness was an important precaution to take against coronavirus. People also said they were concerned about their children, who they feared could catch fever and cold from flood water and might get infected by Covid-19. They wanted to know how to take care of children during this flood situation.

Feedback from adolescent girls in Bagerhat suggests that they were struggling to get hold of sanitary napkins and so were using cloths during menstruation instead. Because of decreased family income, mothers were not able to save money as before to be able to buy sanitary pads for their daughters. According to feedback, a packet of sanitary pads costs more than BDT 100, which could instead buy 2 to 3kg of rice for the family. Moreover, some NGOs used to supply sanitary pads at home at a reduced price but, because of the Covid-19 situation, NGO workers had stopped providing any home service.

## Early marriage has increased in Kurigram

Community feedback from Kurigram suggests that early marriage has increased during the pandemic. Families who have lost income opportunities were struggling to cover the food expenses of their family members and have been marrying off their daughters. According to feedback, it has become less expensive for families to arrange marriage ceremonies during the pandemic because fewer people need to be invited. People said that the money saved from having a smaller ceremony had allowed them to afford a larger dowry. Grooms' families were also motivated to go ahead with marriage at this time, since the dowry would be very useful in this time of crisis, according to feedback. People also mentioned that many NGOs that used to work to stop early marriages in Kurigram had ceased their activities because of the Covid-19 situation, and this had therefore become an enabling factor for the parents.



## Pregnant women face difficulties in accessing antenatal care while working women struggle to retain jobs and income

Pregnant women from Bhola and Barguna said that getting regular antenatal check-ups had become difficult for them, since doctors were not available in the health complexes. They said that they were worried about the health of their babies and wanted to know how to prevent themselves from being infected with Covid-19. Women were keen to know about whether their child would become infected if they caught the virus themselves and whether they would be able to breastfeed their child if they had Covid-19.

Working women from Barguna said that female employees had been more likely to lose their jobs than male employees and expressed their worries about the uncertainty of getting jobs in the future. They said that, after losing their jobs, they had become dependent on their husbands who were now the sole earner in the family. Due to a reduced family income, they said that their husbands were stressed and would lose their temper quite easily, sometimes reacting violently to their wives. Some poorer women living in more remote areas said that their husbands had forced them out of their houses after abusing them but that they were not able to file complaints or seek justice as the courts were closed because of the current Covid-19 situation.

Women from Kurigram said that it was a common practice for women to sew and chat together in their yards during the afternoons. They explained that they used to sew comforters (*katha*) together, which would earn them some money, but that they could no longer do this because of the need to maintain social distancing. They said that this had therefore stopped them from earning and they wanted to know when everything would return to normal, so they could live their lives as before.



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# Community information needs

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Tripura community wanted to know how to maintain proper health and hygiene measures to prevent Covid-19 while collecting wood outside for livelihood

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## Vaccines and medicines for Covid-19 treatment

Community feedback suggests that people wanted to know about vaccine development progress. People had heard from social media, newspapers, radio and television that China and India were trying to manufacture vaccines for Covid-19. People wanted to know if the government in Bangladesh would import those vaccines or whether any company from Bangladesh had been working on vaccine development. People also asked what the price of the vaccine would be and whether the vaccine would be accessible to the public or not. Some people said that they had heard about medicines which were being used to treat Covid-19 patients and wanted to know about the authenticity of that information and the effectiveness of those medicines. They also wanted to know if there was any homoeopathic medicine which would work for Covid-19 patients.

## Testing facilities for Covid-19

People from Bhola showed their concerns regarding the testing facilities available in their area. They wanted to know why testing kits were not available at the general hospitals. They said that the hospital had to send samples to Barishal or Dhaka for testing and that results were not available for 15 or 16 days. They were fearful because, by the time the result of the test arrived, people who had the disease might have infected others or might die without getting proper medical care.

## Chance of Covid-19 reinfection

Many people from Rajshahi wanted information about the possibility of getting infected by the coronavirus for a second time. They wanted to know whether symptoms would change if a person was reinfected. They also wanted to know why maintaining social distance was still necessary even after the ease of lockdown.

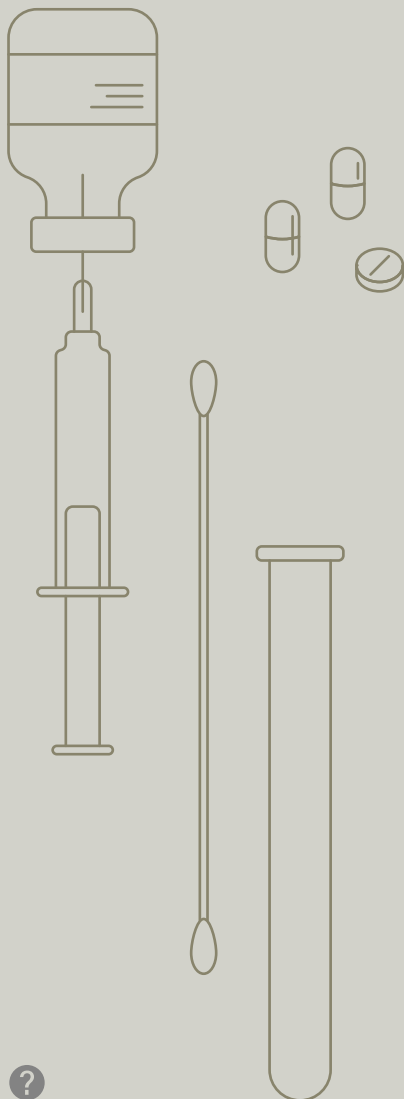
## Safety and protection from Covid-19

Daily workplace commuters from Rajshahi and Sitakunda said that, as they were returning to their workplaces after lockdown had eased, they wanted to know what kind of precautionary measures they should take while going outside and what could be done to ensure safety within their workplaces.

People from Kurigram wanted to know what they should do to ensure isolation if anyone tested positive, as they lived in joint families in small houses. They asked whether there were any alternatives to isolation. Moreover, they wanted to know if wearing masks alone could prevent them from being infected by the coronavirus or not. They also wanted to know how many times a single surgical mask could be used, as surgical masks were hard to get in some areas and they felt that masks were quite expensive.

## Food for developing immunity

People from Rajshahi and Sitakunda wanted to know what types of foods would help them to develop immunity to Covid-19. Tripura community in Sitakunda also asked what types of foods they should eat and whether there were any foods that people infected with Covid-19 should avoid.



## Students worried about the next part of their education

From Hatiya and Kurigram, HSC students and their parents wanted to know whether their exams would take place this year and, if so, when they were likely to happen. They wanted to know whether the government had any alternative plans for these students. Specifically, they asked how their session would be counted when they applied for university admission, if they were not able to participate exams this year. (Students who were supposed to take their exams in 2020 would normally have been counted as part of the 2020-21 session – but if the exam is delayed until 2021, students wanted to know how they would be distinguished from those in the 2021-22 session.) Students who passed their SSC recently were concerned about being admitted to college because of uncertainty and lack of clarity about the process of admission. Students who normally study in Dhaka or other cities, but who went to their village after educational institutions closed, were worried about the online classes. They shared that, due to scarcity of electricity and poor internet signal, they were struggling to join online classes.



## People who returned to villages from cities are struggling to cope

Community feedback from Bhola and Barguna suggests that, after losing jobs and incurring losses in businesses, people who lived in cities like Dhaka, Chattogram, and Khulna had migrated to their villages and started to live with extended family members, raising several issues. People who had migrated were concerned about what they would do for their livelihood in the villages and whether or not they would be able to return to their previous jobs and lifestyle. On the other hand, their family members expressed concerns about increased living costs as more people were living in the household. They were also worried about how long they would have to face this situation and whether or not their family members would be able to go back to the cities soon.

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 Radio Chilmari (Kurigram), Radio Mukti (Bogura), Radio Sagor Dwip (Hatiya, Noakhali), Radio Sagor Giri (Sitakunda, Chattogram), Radio Padma (Rajshahi), Radio Meghna (Charfashion, Bhola), Jago Nari (Barguna), Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (Bagerhat) and Sangrami Pratibandhi Unnayan Sangstha (Chapainowabganj).

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](#).