

Covid-19 situation in Bangladesh and food relief

Tuesday 5 May 2020, by [ALAM Badrul](#) (Date first published: 5 May 2020).

COVID 19 pandemic has become a growing concern, day by day, in Bangladesh. According to government briefing, there are (as of May 5) 10929 affected, 183 dead, 1403 recovered. Number of recoveries is less than that of contagion. These are only official figures. They seem low in a country of 163 million inhabitants, but they do not match reality, as testing rates have been very low.

The government is trying to control the situation with a lot of lapses. That is mainly because of poor health infrastructure, government poor policy responsibility with respect to the people and lack of understanding to take timely measures in a disaster period.

The Bangladeshi administration declared countrywide lockdown on 25 March 2020 but it should have acted earlier when the first patient was identified at the international airport on 7 March 2020.

Because of lockdown people cannot move from one place to another. All transport and industries, especially the garment industries, have been, up to the hilt, closed. As a result, the workers are fully devoid of work and remain unpaid. In these circumstances they cannot feed their family, and face uncertainty. To meet production deadlines from American and European garment brands, factories have started production again, against lockdown rules, but workers then are forced to go to work without any protection.

Peasants are also encountering the same uncertainty in their livelihood issue.

The government declared stimulus of Tk. 5000/- for the peasantry of the country as a loan of 5% interest. Moreover, it extended its support programme under so-called social safety net scheme but the problem is that there is corruption in the management of the scheme; so the poor peasants are being deprived.

We have made frequent statements to the government to bring management system on the track, stop irregularities on the relief distribution process and provide loans among peasants with zero interest.

Owing to the shutdown across the country, our BKF-BKS and allied organisations members are in a vulnerable situation. They need humanitarian support for their very survival. We asked them to contact Deputy Commissioner who is the district chief of the administration. Some of the members, who are so poor already, got material support from the administration, which is good. But still there are lots of members who could not go to get relief help and failed to collect any support from local administration. They are genuine victims of the precarious situation of the pandemic.

We identified 110 such families who are the members of the organisations remained out of a support system. We have already given cash support of Tk. 1000/- through mobile banking to 50 members like this apart from the above-mentioned families. We need to mobilise small support for the families who are deserving in such a crucial time.



We managed to distribute food relief to our members who live in the city of Dhaka, the capital. We tried to maintain health safety issues in relation to COVID 19 as much as possible. Here, social distancing is a privilege of the rich and middle class. The conditions are very problematic in poor urban districts where people live in close proximity to each other. Tenements are small and cramped, with most of the time several large families sharing a single tap and toilet.

The social consequences of the Covid crisis are becoming graver and graver. Every day, starving people are queueing by thousands along the big roadside of Dhaka, waiting for relief. No job for them means no food. Our members living in the city are joining them.

Badrul Alam

President

Bangladesh Krishok Federation

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We keep you regularly informed via our website of the situation and use of the solidarity fund.
