

Disability-inclusive COVID-19 Response of Access Bangladesh Foundation

Access Bangladesh Foundation, a registered non-government organization was established on January 4, 2008. It exclusively works for the socio-economic development of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh.

A. Situation of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh in the pandemic COVID-19

- **Insufficient Government allowance:** Allocation for persons with disabilities is insufficient to address needs of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Job insecurity:** Most of employees with disabilities work in ready-made garment industries. Majority of the factories across the country have already closed down due to the government's announcement of public holiday to prevent spreading of coronavirus since March 26. According to BGMEA, 1136 factories reported that it has lost USD\$3.15 billion in cancelled/postponed orders, equivalent to 976 million pieces. A staggering 2.26 million workers are affected thus far. In addition, there will be a significant impact on the livelihood of workers with disabilities in the formal economy.
- **Difficulty to follow and maintain general safety precautions:** People with hearing impairment uses lip reading as one of the most common ways of communication, can't be used while wearing a mask. People with physical disorders including cerebral palsy and spinal cord injury may not able to follow general safety precautions independently.
- **Poor health condition:** Some people with disabilities might be at a higher risk of infection or severe illness because of their health conditions. All people seem to be at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 if they have serious chronic medical conditions like chronic lung disease, a serious heart condition, or a weakened immune system.
- **Difficulties in accessing to services:** Existing physical, attitudinal and institutional barriers may prevent persons with disabilities from accessing health services, water and hygiene infrastructure and communication messages.
- **Stigma:** Pre-existing prejudice may cause a person with disability who gets infected with COVID-19 to be subjected to increase stigma, which can create a barrier to accessing appropriate health services.
- **Limited access to information:** If information is not presented in accessible format, persons with disabilities may not have access to information on how COVID-19 is transmitted, what are the symptoms and how they can protect themselves against the disease.
- **Social distancing & separation from caregivers:** Social distancing, a key strategy for reducing the spread of infection in communities, is difficult for those who need support for everyday activities. Persons with disabilities, at increased risk, would their family members or caregivers become infected with the virus and require quarantine or self-isolation. Children with different types of disabilities, including children with learning disabilities are particularly susceptible to abuse or to denial of access to services.

B. Reasons of starting emergency response initiative

Access Bangladesh Foundation is implementing some projects in Dhaka, Pabna, Gazipur, Narsingdi, Rangpur and Bandarban districts with local Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs); The organization got several requests for emergency food support from the people with disabilities living in different corners of the country since the country has gone under lockdown. To address this crisis, Access Bangladesh started its immediate food support program for extremely poor people with disabilities by donating 10% salary of a month of all employees of the organization. Later we received fund from Bangladesh Business & Disability Network (BBDN), Manusher Jonno Foundation, British Women's Association, British Aid Guest House Association (BAGHA) Club, PFDA Vocational Training Centre, Angel Chef, and other individual donors.

C. Major initiatives taken by Access Bangladesh Foundation

To respond the COVID-19 from disability perspective, the organization has taken the following initiatives:

- Initiate online advocacy campaign to have a "Disability-inclusive COVID-19 responses" in Bangladesh.
- Raise awareness among the persons with disabilities about the risks of Corona virus and how they can protect themselves
- Set up a Help Desk to provide mental health support to persons with disabilities
- Set up a Help Desk for providing support to employees with disabilities as many employees with disabilities can lose jobs
- Set up a Help Desk for Disabled People's Organizations to disseminate information and to provide advice regarding accessing relief supports
- Sensitize all Disabled People's Organizations in Bangladesh to create database of extremely poor persons with disabilities countrywide
- Operate a dedicated Facebook page to raise awareness and to update our activities
- Provide food and non-food supports to extremely poor persons with disabilities

D. Food and Non-food support

No. of family	Food materials for each family	Area
360	Rice, Pulse, Potato, Edible Oil, Onion, Ginger, Egg, Noodles, Salt, Soap and Mask, Hand Sanitizer	Dhamrai Chuadanga Moulvizar Rangpur Natore
850 (To be distributed by April, 2020)	Rice, Pulse, Potato, Edible Oil, Onion, Ginger, Egg, Noodles, Salt, Soap and Mask, Hand Sanitizer	Rangpur Tongi Kushtia Meherpur Kurigram Mymensingh Jeshore Pabna Savar Dhamrai

E. Supporters

Bangladesh Business & Disability Network (BBDN)
Manusher Jonno Foundation
PFDA Vocational Training Centre, Angel Chef
British Women's Association
British Aid Guest House Association (BAGHA) Club
Savar Sub-District
Access Bangladesh Staff Members
Taize Brothers
Ms. Eva
Ms. Sameena Sami
Naomi Iwamoto
Ms. Wahida Amin
Ms. Rokshana Akther
Lt. Col. Lina Forance
Ms. Surya Akter
Ms. Jahanaraapa
Mr. Mohammad Abu Musa
Mr. Mohammad Nuruzzaman
Dr. Monira Sarmin



Fig: Food & Masks distribution among persons with disabilities

F. Emergency food and hygiene assistance strategy

- i. Food and hygiene support (Essential food items including Rice, Pulse, Potato, Edible Oil, Salt and Soap which equivalent BDT 1500/- for each family or Cash support (BDT 1500/-) for each family
- ii. Information collection through a prescribed form with mentioning information like Name, Father's name, address, cell no, types of disability, gender, economic condition etc
- iii. Distribution through maintaining proper documentation like signature sheet, picture etc
- iv. Local DPOs are engaged for distribution of food and non-food items under close supervision of Access Bangladesh
- v. Follow-up

G. Needs of persons with disabilities

Immediate:

- Support is needed for providing emergency food (Rice, Pulse, Potato, Edible Oil, Salt)and hygiene support(soap, hand sanitizer masks, detergent)for 5000 extremely poor families having members with disabilities throughout the country

Medium and Long-term:

- Support will be needed for providing livelihood support (Training and Financial support) for 1000 persons with disabilities who will lose their job/business due to COVID -19