

SAVING
LIVES
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LIVES



WFP COVID-19 RESPONSE: SUPPORT TO THE HOST COMMUNITY

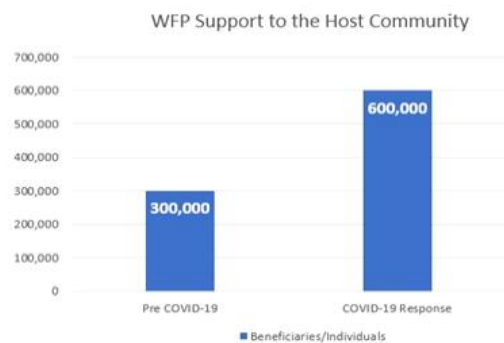
Cox's Bazar is one of the most vulnerable and disaster-prone districts of Bangladesh. The COVID-19 crisis has further heightened the complexities in the impoverished and underdeveloped areas. Approximately 30 percent of the population are considered to be extremely vulnerable with serious needs owing to malnutrition and deplorable food security status.*

Much like the rest of the world, COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh are on the rise. While it is essential to comply with the nationwide restrictions to prevent the transmission of the disease, the restrictions have also made it difficult for daily wage labourers to meet critical needs. This is compounded by the monsoon and cyclone seasons which can exacerbate the already overstretched basic resource situation.

In 2018 alone, more than 25,000 refugees and host community members were severely impacted due to heavy monsoons.

In the rapidly evolving situation demanding critical humanitarian services, WFP has stepped up with its multifaceted response to support the most vulnerable population.

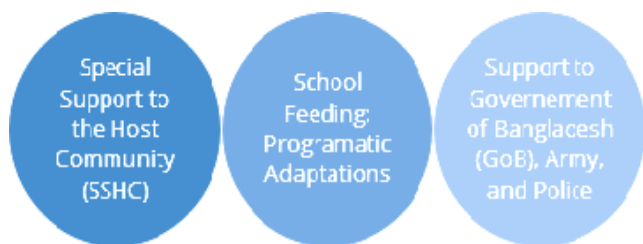
While many of the non-essential programmes and services have been suspended, WFP has rapidly made critical adaptations to the most critical programmes to continue assisting the extremely vulnerable population.



As part of the emergency response, WFP assisted approximately 300,000 individuals in the host areas through a range of activities which due to COVID-19 is scaled-up to include more than 600,000 extremely vulnerable individuals.

Assurance of required support from the existing systems, in collaboration and co-ordination with the government authorities helps ensure trust on the part of the people.

Based on the evolving needs of the host population, WFP has responded with tailor-made programmes of in-kind and cash assistance. WFP continues to provide malnutrition treatment assistance to over 13,000 children and pregnant and nursing women. Ensuring effective community engagement in programme adaptations is of utmost importance to WFP. Alongside, WFP provides critical support to the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), the army and local security forces with essential logistical support and common services.



SPECIAL SUPPORT TO THE HOST COMMUNITY

In coordination with the district level government authorities, WFP has adopted a phased approach as part of its COVID-19 response. WFP plans to assist over half a million people (105,000 households) in a span of three to six months, which includes the previously identified households as part of WFP’s livelihoods programme.

The one-off scheme embraces a hybrid assistance package including food and cash for the extremely vulnerable population. Beneficiaries are receiving HEBs in the first phase, and food commodities and cash in the final phases of the assistance. The scheme is being implemented in all ten sub-districts of Cox’s Bazar.



WFP SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

For the last two decades, WFP has a rich experience of implementing complementary feeding programme in the host and refugee communities. In Cox’s Bazar specifically, WFP has assisted 134,519 children across 524 schools in collaboration with the Government. In Cox’s Bazar, WFP will assist children across all the five sub-districts with 50 packets of HEBs each covering two months (except for those

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sub-districts where emergency assistance is being implemented). This will be implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.



The logistics sector, in collaboration with WFP, RRRCC and the Inter-sector Co-ordination Group, launched the Humanitarian Access Project. Considering the bottlenecks due to long traffic jams on the way to the camps, this is a smart and fully digitalized solution supporting the government, Border Guards Bangladesh and army to facilitate access for the essential service providers.

This has ensured digital verification and documentation of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission approved vehicles travelling to the camps for critical services, while maintaining social distancing. On an average 700 vehicles cross different checkpoints in a matter of a few minutes.

SUPPORT TO GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH (GOB)

In the COVID-19 response, WFP has rapidly stepped up to support the GoB in its efforts to tackle the crisis in a multifaceted manner. WFP is augmenting accommodation capacity at the Madhurchara logistics hub for humanitarian partners who need to stay closer to the camps.

Capacity Strengthening

- 17 prefabs
- 2 Mobile Service Units (MSUs)
- 3 high pressure car washers
- 14 thermal guns
- 10 generators
- 1,000 kgs of bleaches procured for usage and distribution across the humanitarian agencies

In-kind support for people in government quarantine and isolation facilities

Health facilities for UN/ humanitarian agencies in both the refugee camps and the host areas.

4500 individuals will be assisted in these centres.



In collaboration with the cooperating partners, WFP is engaging individuals (participants of livelihoods programme) in mask production.

The use of mask is considered extremely critical as a protection measure for COVID-19. In both the host community more than 40 participants are engaged in mask production which will be distributed amongst the community members in collaboration with the local government officials.

“I was earlier running my own tailoring business which I was struggling to continue after COVID-19 restrictions were imposed. I feel relieved now because now I am not just able to earn my livelihoods from this but also able to help the larger community.”

COVID -19 RESPONSE: RATIONALE FOR ASSISTANCE

COVID-19 has severely impacted the food security and livelihoods situation of the population, further compounded by the market fluctuations affecting prices of staple commodities such as rice, lentils and oil.

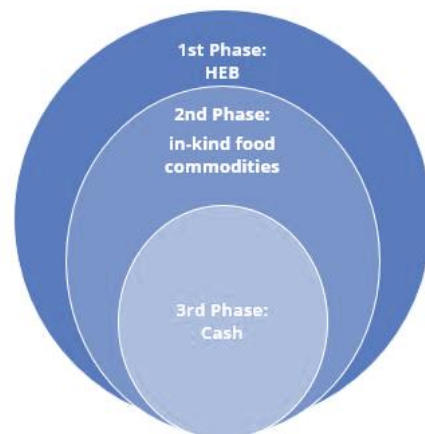
A WFP market assessment suggested that there has been significant increase in prices of rice, cooking oil and pulses (red lentils) ranging from 10 – 50 percent, between February and April 2020.

In this regard, WFP considers in-kind and cash assistance to the most vulnerable populations across Cox’s Bazar district to be of high priority. This also has a positive impact on social interaction and enhances possibility of peaceful coexistence between different socio-economic groups.

It also helps defuse misinformation or anxieties around food scarcity and distribution of aid to different population groups. Understanding the conflict sensitivities at this juncture, WFP has undertaken effective measures for mainstreaming of the major concerns so as to ensure maximization of the positive impacts and reduce any unintended negative impacts.

This has been ensured through inclusive targeting and enhanced communication with communities channels: **WFP has stepped up to assist over half a million individuals.**

Furthermore, ensuring solidarity and mutual trust at the community, household and individual levels is essential.



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I want to be a teacher when I grow up. My teacher used to give me these biscuits regularly. Now even though our schools are closed, I am happy that I will continue to receive these biscuits at home.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Poppy Baruah ran her own shop in the WFP farmers' market which had to be suspended due to COVID-19. The savings she had from the few months of engagement are helping her through the worst days. WFP has started remote awareness sessions with the livelihood beneficiaries in the host areas, who were earlier involved in small-scale businesses. This serves as a key source of information for the participants and their families who have little to no access to the markets or any other mode of communication.

It was the first time Poppy stepped out to sell her own produce at the farmers' market on behalf of her group which is one of the 800 women's groups that WFP supports through its livelihoods programme in the host community. With her savings from the farmer's market, she installed a deep tube well in her village.

"We used to face huge issues due to water scarcity which is now resolved due to the tube well we built. I had to buy water from neighbours to grow vegetable which is no more a concern now."

Alike Poppy, many of the other farmers, especially women have gained self-confidence and feel financially and socially empowered more now than before.

COVID-19 has affected the food-security situation of the poorest of the poor host community population, living in a highly precarious situation.

As part of the special support package to the host community in Cox's Bazar, WFP is providing in-kind food assistance and cash support to the extremely vulnerable individuals.

The beneficiaries are identified through an exhaustive targeting process in collaboration with local-government agencies.

"We have received information on what to do and what not to do to stay safe during such situations. In the form of telephonic messages and leaflets we consume a lot of information."



"Earlier this month we received biscuits from WFP. The assistance has brought relief to my children as they used to get biscuits in their schools."

COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITIES

WFP has improved its systems to engage with the communities at multiple levels including using different means to defuse misinformation and rumours. WFP is using tuk tuks to communicate widely on the food assistance and to disseminate key messages on COVID-19. A rapid assessment revealed that access to a stable food source was one of the main means for respondents to cope with the situation, the second being access to cash grants. Most respondents also revealed awareness of the pandemic while confirming that WFP awareness sessions had been hugely helpful.

WAY FORWARD

Ensuring steadfast engagement with the government to support the extremely vulnerable population in need of external support.

Engaging with the community members and ensuring adequate representation of the views from the ground in the new interventions as well as programmatic adaptations.

Complement the in-kind and cash support with essential logistics support for the population at large, as well as the humanitarian partners.

Contacts:
Reports, Analysis and Information Management unit
COXSBAZAROIMREPORTS@wfp.org

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