

**Food Security Sector – Covid-19 Strategic Response – Version 2**

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1. Cox’s Bazar District – FSS Covid-19 Context

The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) which emerged in China at the end of December has now spread globally, with high contact rates and uncertain economic impact. Given the large population density in Bangladesh, without prevention and mitigation initiatives, according to globally accepted modelling techniques, an estimated [2 million lives could be](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.scmp.com%2Fweek-asia%2Fhealth-environment%2Farticle%2F3077936%2Fcoronavirus-bangladesh-defends-readiness-after-leaked&data=02%7C01%7Cakira.kaneko%40wfp.org%7Cf2e83372fa5e4ee1e23608d7d8594f7c%7C462ad9aed7d94206b87471b1e079776f%7C0%7C0%7C637215750400618593&sdata=sMNZusGzANJBy05Oj8kox0PrftVJJKOk3h49wdZxt%2F0%3D&reserved=0) lost throughout Bangladesh during the epidemic wave. In order to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Bangladesh has issued ‘Stay at Home’ directives shutting down productive and commercial activities from 26 March through April 11th and international borders, including trade routes, have been greatly restricted.

The breakdown of food systems during the crisis could lead to years of decreased agricultural productivity and worsening of food and nutrition indicators for many. The District is one of the country’s poorest and most vulnerable, with a total Bangladeshi population of 2,650,000. Additionally, the District Administration of Cox’s Bazar predicts that more than 700,000 people in Cox’s Bazar District will be immediately jobless due to the ‘Stay at Home’ directive. This loss of livelihoods coupled with a decrease in access to the local market has left many poor people not being able to meet their basic needs and resulted in extra support needs for FSS Sector.

Further, Cox’s Bazar District hosts the largest refugee camp in the world, with 855,000 Rohingya residing in 34 makeshift camps. The overcrowding and poor hygienic and sanitary conditions in these camps increase the potential for rapid spread of disease. The Rohingya refugee population is entirely reliant on humanitarian assistance. It is essential to sustain access to life saving services while strengthening coordination to address additional response requirements from the pandemic.

To this end, the Inter-sectoral response is working quickly to limit staff footprint in the camps while also maintaining access to critical lifesaving activities through FSS, WASH, Health and CwC activities. The humanitarian community has drafted an [Inter-sectoral COVID-19 response plan](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oF8lvN7D0VmuKaTlhMWIyiQ4AM1iErLl) led by the Health Sector and in line with [Government of Bangladesh Plan](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1vw9Bia_lfxMAASbKeEDJFFipdk-KpeOG). In parallel, cross-sectoral plans are in place to identify, supply, and provide food to field hospitals and isolation centres in preparation for a potential outbreak.

In order to most effectively mitigate both the short-term impact of disease outbreak and effectively plan for necessary field hospital and isolation centres as well as anticipate the immediate and long-term economic impact, FSS sector is working quickly to support the response and partners in harmonization of activities, address key information gaps, work cross-sectorally, and ensure partners receive up to date information. Through these activities, the Food Security Sector response is looking at the four pillars of food security: especially at physical and economic availability of food through support to food production for the most vulnerable. Continuation of food distribution and expansion of reach to the poorest Bangladeshis as well as ensuring critical food availability and livelihoods support through agriculture, fisheries, and livestock are critical to reducing the devastating impact of this pandemic.

**The response priorities are:**

* Expanding support to improve food security of the poorest and most vulnerable Bangladeshis in the District whose livelihoods will be impacted by the pandemic, through food, cash support, and agricultural inputs for the most vulnerable according to need across the District.
* Ensuring minimal disruptions in the food production system. As the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina noted in [her speech](https://drive.google.com/open?id=15ijJNCNnwVL0YTIs6qhToLrCQYMo-cpu) on 31 March: ‘the most important thing is food security. Our food production must go on. We have to ensure that not a single inch of agricultural land remains uncultivated so that we can fulfil our food security. Efforts need to be taken to utilise whatever land you have; grow something in your yard; rear chicken, goats, etc. Aiming at the next season, agricultural input and support needed should be ensured so that we can overcome the global recession.’
	+ Align with GoB, DAE, DLS and DoF policies and directives;
	+ Ensure continuity of crop production and harvests in late summer (May – Mid-July), monsoon (Mid-July – Mid-November) and winter seasons (Mid-November – Mid March), livestock raising and aquaculture;
	+ Support agricultural production at household level in yards/homesteads and fields **Priorities**
* In support of the District health response and in coordination with Health Sector, providing multi-sector support to the existing and planned isolation, treatment, and quarantine facilities, including WASH, shelter, logistics and food support for facilities in Ramu, Chakaria, Cox’s Bazar Sadar, Ukhiya and Teknaf. WFP has already insured provision of food to Ramu isolation facility and appealed for funding for this activity;
* Reprogramming of activities to be in line with Covid-19 prevention and risk mitigation measures and to ensure that they support the Covid-19 emergency response. Donors are asked for maximum flexibility on re-programming activities that cannot be carried out due COVID-19 measures, and to allow operational adjustments in the new operating environment (I.e. monitoring through mobile, etc.)
* Ensure that communities are informed/updated on key messages
* Assessments to ensure re/programming initiatives are well informed/prioritized

**Response analysis:** COVID-19 is unfolding from a global health into an economic emergency – and could further unravel into a food security emergency if supply chain disruptions lead to panic buying and anxiety starts to rule global food trade. According to WFP/VAM analysis where food insecurity is caused by restricted access rather than lack of availability, cash-based transfers (CBT) should be considered as a standard response. CBT can be safely distributed via contactless solutions. They can help to stabilize markets aﬀected by containment measures. WFP can play a key role here, as the largest cash provider in the humanitarian community. One of WFP’s ongoing priorities has been to work with national governments to strengthen their own social protection systems. Cash assistance is likely to be the default response of government-led shock responsive safety nets in the face of Covid-19 – this approach will be crucial in helping societies and households to recover after the epidemic ([WFP/VAM, COVID-19: Potential impact on the world’s poorest people A WFP analysis of the economic and food security implications of the pandemic, April 2020](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1FrGrGUfv1DhnbcyXlWMrYlVwBDY9PxGP))

1. Reprogramming of activities

**General (camps and HC)**

* Payment methodology - strive to move to payment methods that do not involve person-person interaction (i.e. bkash)
* Ensure the adoption of the Covid-19 **prevention and risk mitigation measures** for all ongoing activities
* [Health, WASH, FSS, Protection, SNFI, SMSD Recommendations for distributions](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1SHzAtKY_sIzMrPeMdp45u2nzXiT4UNKN)
* [WFP Prevention and Risk Minimization Measures for General Food Assistance](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1f3tY3Y1IwGhLKrxWP3vVvi-PRNX69QHn)

**Camp Specific**

* All non-critical activities in the camps to be put on hold (i.e. learning centres, self-reliance activities)
* **Food Assistance in the Camps:**
	+ WFP is continuing life-saving critical food assistance with the dual modality of e-voucher (80% of caseload) and in-kind food assistance (20%). As per the directive by the RRRC, to contain Covid-19, following essential measures have been taken:
	+ Within the e-voucher modality, WFP introduced a fixed commodity voucher. From April 1, beneficiaries receive fixed food items and quantities decided based on nutritional requirements.  Currently this constitutes of nine food items covering all staple commodities.

**Agricultural support in Host Community**

* Ensure the continuation of agricultural production comprising growing crops, raising livestock and aquaculture in line with the Prime Minister’s March 31st directive
* Further guidance from FAO is forthcoming

**Livelihoods**

* Mask Making
* Other items to support the health response (To be finalized with health sector)
* Cyclone Preparedness/DRR Activities (e.g. early warning, seeds preservation and storing, livestock assets protection, raising banks of fish-ponds, early harvesting, etc)
1. Host Community Specific

**Food Assistance to vulnerable Bangladeshis**

* GoB has requested support from FSS partners to ensure food security of most vulnerable groups in Cox’s Bazar District. Partners are requested to align with GoB policies and social safety net schemes.

**Food Assistance to isolation and quarantine centres**

* **Dry Food Basket for Isolation facilities:** In these circumstances, WFP plans to support up to 1,500 in-patients affected by COVID-19 in hospitals run by the Government and health sector partners for six months. The assistance will consist of in-kind, dry food basket. Furthermore, WFP will also explore the scope of supporting other health sector facilities.
* **Hot Meals for Quarantine centres:** In addition, health sector partners are planning to arrange quarantine facilities to accommodate up to 3,000 potentially affected people. WFP plans to support each patient with three hot meals per day (“Khichuri”, made of vegetables, lentils and rice), in cooperation with Resource Integration Centre (RIC).

**GoB is distributing food assistance to vulnerable Bangladeshis**

* **Eligibility:** Individuals with cards issued by GoB to vulnerable groups (persons living with disability, older persons, persons with health problems) are eligible to receive below assistance through MoDMR or the military:

**MoDMR dry food package Military Package**

Rice: 20 kg Rice: 20 kg

Flour: 2 kg Flour: 2 kg

Oil: 1 litre Oil: 1 litre

Salt: 1 kg Salt: 1 kg

Potato: 1 kg Potato: 5 kg

Onion: 1 kg Onion: 1 kg

Soap: 2 bars

**Subsidized rice**

* BDT 10 per kg for persons with GoB issued Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) card (to be verified)

**Cooked meals**

* 200 cooked meals are currently being provided in Cox’s Bazar Sadar daily (to be verified)

**Food Security Cluster**

* Dhaka recommended food package which was validated in 2019 can be found through this [link](https://fscluster.org/bangladesh/document/fsc-food-assistance-package-2018)
1. Social Safety Net Program / Ideal Cash Package

**Cash Assistance:** There are no restrictions by GoB in the provision of cash assistance to Bangladeshis. GoB is providing cash assistance through different Social Safety Net schemes.

FSS and Transfers Working Group are coordinating on harmonized targeting criteria, transfer amount, and spatial coverage following the Multi-Purpose Cash Grants (MPCG) Operational [Guidelines](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1TDVtwD-CQ-cDAMe89iMogQM63cLXCjzlhttps://drive.google.com/open?id=1TDVtwD-CQ-cDAMe89iMogQM63cLXCjzl) by the national Cash Working Group**. An operational guideline for Cox’s Bazar context being drafted and discussed within members of TWG and FSS/LHWG.**

To ensure harmonization and coordination of assistance, partners are requested to coordinate with FSS and Transfers Working Group on targeting criteria, transfer amount, and spatial coverage.

Approved multi-purpose cash package to provide emergency life-saving assistance and to avoid negative coping practices has been set at BDT 5,500 per household in rural areas and BDT 7,500 HH per household in urban areas in Cox’s Bazar District.

Please see the Multi-Purpose Cash Grants (MPCG) Operational Guidelines by the national Cash Working Group and [Introduction to Social Safety Net Programmes in Bangladesh](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1EWfdyBLnWkhfSobx7Se19c7V1VCsfNsI) by FSS

Please refer to [draft Guidelines by Cox’s Bazar Transfer Working Group](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1QQpgHCRWWOYtOz_T9Uehq3G8JfZc9hxghttps://drive.google.com/open?id=1QQpgHCRWWOYtOz_T9Uehq3G8JfZc9hxg)

1. Quarantine and Isolation Centres



1. Continuity of agricultural production and harvests

**Useful Links:**

* [Key points from Bangladesh Prime Minister’s video conference with Government officials on COVID-19 Response](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdrive.google.com%2Fopen%3Fid%3D1O5HV-AqtbNvXg3lMWQf7oi-eG42_iVQH&data=02%7C01%7Cleah.beaulac%40wfp.org%7C7efcb6175dee45ef50fb08d7d7c4fd58%7C462ad9aed7d94206b87471b1e079776f%7C0%7C0%7C637215113370092692&sdata=zSOPwolUW%2Bn%2B2kpy4yux1ez88DImNbyyh2nUx%2BrJdrE%3D&reserved=0), stressing importance of food Security
* 31 March translated and shared by FAO and ISCG: [Implementation of action plan to increase food production in compliance with the kind instruction of the Prime Minister](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdrive.google.com%2Fopen%3Fid%3D1KLR8bawOI5bIJOqFkWUgXLd_7mDhqV9O&data=02%7C01%7Cleah.beaulac%40wfp.org%7C7efcb6175dee45ef50fb08d7d7c4fd58%7C462ad9aed7d94206b87471b1e079776f%7C0%7C0%7C637215113370092692&sdata=8YfgRXYuGUHX%2BFS0O3rq9ApRXurJjG3NHrTslfmHN2E%3D&reserved=0) by Department of Agricultural Extension, Government of Bangladesh
* FAO HQ: [Q&A: COVID-19 pandemic – impact on food and agriculture](https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fao_qa_impact_on_food_and_agriculture.pdf)
1. FSS Communication with Communities

Communication with beneficiaries on prevention and risk mitigation measures as well as changes to service provision using [audio and visual tools](http://www.shongjog.org.bd/resources/i/?id=ce0f6749-e7af-4168-aad0-aa81904040b9) provided by CwC partners.

* [Key Messages and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Materials](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1sFALdkFj8by-2P_hkvc7hQGDxQuSDL5A)
* Poster on steps to reduce the risk of infections ([English](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Fuc6K92giNrDDuwPCR6FotaJQnMoaRRv)) ([Bangla](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1d4FrXTG5pRWiYUfXGbhNbhOILgd-W4nn))
* [Rumour tracking tool](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1l7TDW1iyKYTSB3_OBSkCIzFHz8S4LFc1) to be used to report misinformation to CwCWG

**Useful Links:**

* [Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1DqJN5B2560BlAzd9lydqW9Zpmpzq-KP_) by Risk Communication WG
* [COVID-19 Explained](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.humanitarianresponse.info%2Fen%2Foperations%2Fbangladesh%2Fdocument%2Fcovid-19-explained&data=02%7C01%7Cleah.beaulac%40wfp.org%7C7efcb6175dee45ef50fb08d7d7c4fd58%7C462ad9aed7d94206b87471b1e079776f%7C0%7C0%7C637215113370102685&sdata=ZXiODbIFpFMLzpWHeGR0U0OtoiGEaTesQFXtlf1OsJY%3D&reserved=0) 2nd edition focusing on Rohingya perceptions of the essential service categorization and information the Rohingya want us to know right now (ACAPS, IOM)
* [Alternative ways to greet for Covid-19 (Coronavirus) prevention](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fa62y6decj8wjn3q%2F2020-04-01%2520-%2520Alternative%2520ways%2520of%2520greetings%2520%2528Rohingya%2520language%2529.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Cleah.beaulac%40wfp.org%7C7efcb6175dee45ef50fb08d7d7c4fd58%7C462ad9aed7d94206b87471b1e079776f%7C0%7C0%7C637215113370102685&sdata=0z5XocnnbJ79VD9lB4lpMNV4q88dgU8C%2FjVz7Ljg78s%3D&reserved=0) and [How to wash hands properly](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Ftwze0lvlt1o3l35%2F2020-04-01%2520-%2520How%2520to%2520wash%2520your%2520hands%2520properly%2520%2528Rohingya%2520language%2529.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Cleah.beaulac%40wfp.org%7C7efcb6175dee45ef50fb08d7d7c4fd58%7C462ad9aed7d94206b87471b1e079776f%7C0%7C0%7C637215113370112676&sdata=Hbze0DwoKQcY3SnGzT%2F%2Bz1F9gn%2F9cR56kl3DEDfEhgg%3D&reserved=0) (Rohingya language), in video format (IOM)
1. Assessments addressing Covid-19 FSS specific information gaps

**WFP** food security and market monitoring initiative: Monitor the impact of Covid-19 on food security and market prices over time and to track trends on households in the Host Community and refugee camps. These assessments/surveys are being conducted jointly with WFP M&E and VAM teams. WFP started including a set of standard questions around COVID-19 awareness in its hotline, and collecting any possible rumours through the rumours tracking sheet to report to CwCWG.

**FAO** Assessing the Existing Capacity and Potential Impact of Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Epidemic on Agricultural Market Chains in Cox's Bazar: Understand the current agricultural production capacity and market functionality. (ongoing)

**REACH**: In initial stages to assess the feasibility of conducting a market monitoring initiative in the refugee camps.