

Dear colleagues, partners and friends,

We need to act now, and we need to act together.

In Bangladesh, what started as a public health crisis will rapidly turn into a humanitarian crisis if we don't collectively work together. After seven days of economic shutdown, people living in poverty, or just above the poverty line, are suffering a devastating blow.

The good news is that 45% of Bangladeshis, those working in the agricultural sector, are still active with minimal impact on their economic prospects.

The stories of the other 55% are different - a large majority of whom are in the informal sector and survive on daily wages.

Cities across Bangladesh emptied after the lockdown was announced. More than half the population of Dhaka city left for rural areas, taking with them whatever cash they could manage to liquidate. These people can survive for 1-2 weeks without external support.

Those still living in urban areas face a disastrous reality as the shutdown gets prolonged. With economic activities all but stopped, millions working in the informal sector - rickshaw pullers, owners of roadside food stalls, construction workers - are now at risk of starvation.

We have intensified our efforts to support those most vulnerable with emergency relief, in addition to our current behaviour change and awareness campaign.

In the first phase, we will assist 100,000 families with two weeks worth of food supplies and cash support of USD 18 (BDT 1,500) starting from today. Please see details on our fundraising campaign [here](#).

But the need remains greater. Despite the government's allocation of 40,000 MT of rice, our efforts threaten to fall short of the mark.

We will thus continue our endeavour to expand the scope of the relief, and the BRAC family will do everything we can to ensure your financial support reaches those who need it the most.

Since our means are limited compared to the demand, we have also taken an initiative to coordinate among non-state actors to avoid duplication of efforts. We will launch a dedicated website with a map of activities for these organisations in the coming week. Using our existing data, we will share the number of households within slums, average poverty levels, age and occupation breakdowns. This will enable organisations working to distribute relief within slums to access a one-stop data portal that will inform planning, minimise duplication, and maximise reach.

We cannot succumb to fear and anxiety. Now more than ever, we must invest in hope, empathy and compassion. All of us have the ability to light a candle for those facing darker times.

Please see details on the latest situation and our work in the [attached situation report](#).

Asif Saleh
Executive Director
BRAC