

The Impact of COVID-19 among the Most Vulnerable Groups in the Host Community in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Findings from a mixed-methods participatory action research

BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health (JPGSPH), BRAC University, in partnership with Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ), BRAC University, and with the financial support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, conducted participatory action research in four Host community wards in the Rajapalong union of Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar from November August 2020 to July 2021 with the aim to provide critical evidence to support policies and interventions to mitigate the adverse impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable groups in the Host community of Cox's Bazar.

Single Female Household Heads

- 20%** reported complete **STOP** of income
- 62%** reported a **decline** in income
- 78%** reported **decline** in food consumption
- 57%** took loans from relatives, friends & neighbors
- 14%** received food/cash support from Govt. agencies
- 62%** received support from International and National Non-Govt. organizations



"I used to work as a maid. I lost my only earning source during the pandemic and could not manage any other job.....In our village, men have many working opportunities but not us. So, since I lost my job, I struggled to arrange two meals for my family....Sometimes I skipped meals so that my children could eat" (41 years old adult female)

"I faced so many obstacles because of this coronavirus and lockdown...My delivery was near and the hospitals were either closed or the doctors were not checking-up on me properly...I had to go from hospital to hospital with labor pain during the lockdown. O Allah! Those memories are nightmares..." (29 year old female)



Pregnant and Lactating Mothers

- 29%** reported **disruption** in MNCH services
- 28%** **did not receive** in ANC services
- 38%** **did not receive** PNC services
- 40%** reported giving birth **at HOME**

Persons with Disabilities

- 52%** had a physical disability
- 60%** reported an adverse impact on day-to-day work
- 33%** reported **worrying about mental health**
- 40%** reported **worrying about physical health**
- 41%** reported **worrying about finances**



"I had lost my business (selling vegetables) and became dependent on family members. As I am already physically dependent on them, this economic dependency made me feel more helpless and miserable" (35 years old female)

"My parents were forcing me to get married as they do not have any income now... I do not want to get married...I know if I could talk to my teacher, they would help me, but there is no way to contact them... it is my bad luck as the school will not be open any soon... My dream of continuing education would stay a dream...I am feeling hopeless." (15 years old female)



Adolescents

- <1%** reported being **forced into child marriage**
- 14%** had access to online education
- 75%** reported complete **STOP** in education
- 6%** studied at home with the help of a tutor

Elderly People

- 75%** reported adverse impact on day-to-day work
- 62%** reported **complete loss of mobility**
- 33%** reported **worrying about family**
- 40%** reported **worrying about family's wellbeing**
- 41%** reported **worrying about finances**



"When I heard that COVID-19 has been detected in Bangladesh, I got so scared. I lost my peace of mind... I heard from my son and watched on TV that people who were above 50 years old are in more danger... people are also spreading fear in my mind, and I could not sleep properly at night. Now I am always thinking that what will happen to me if I get infected with the virus." (70 years old elderly female)