

ENSURING WE SUPPORT THOSE WHO NEED IT THE MOST

Forced closures and lockdowns around the world to prevent further spread of COVID–19 have exacerbated pre-existing issues and contributed to new ones, including a major economic shock that could unravel recent progress toward meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and push 60 million people into extreme poverty by the end of the year.

In addition to the first rise in poverty rates since 1998, experts have also predicted the following impacts as a result of COVID–19:

- Nearly **265 million people are at risk of facing severe food shortages and starvation** by the end of the year, almost twice the number of people suffering from food insecurity before the pandemic;
- Lockdowns and confinement will make **access to regular Gender Based Violence (GBV) services more difficult** and could increase intimate partner violence.
- The worsening socio-economic situation will **heighten the vulnerability of refugee women and girls** who are at risk of sexual exploitation;
- Increased usage of digital technology and digital learning will cause **greater disparity between those who have access to the internet and those who do not**, particularly in low-income countries.



With decades long experience of realising the potential of local solutions, BRAC's community based response approaches and collectiveness will certainly reduce the impact of COVID–19 on people living in poverty. We will not fail."

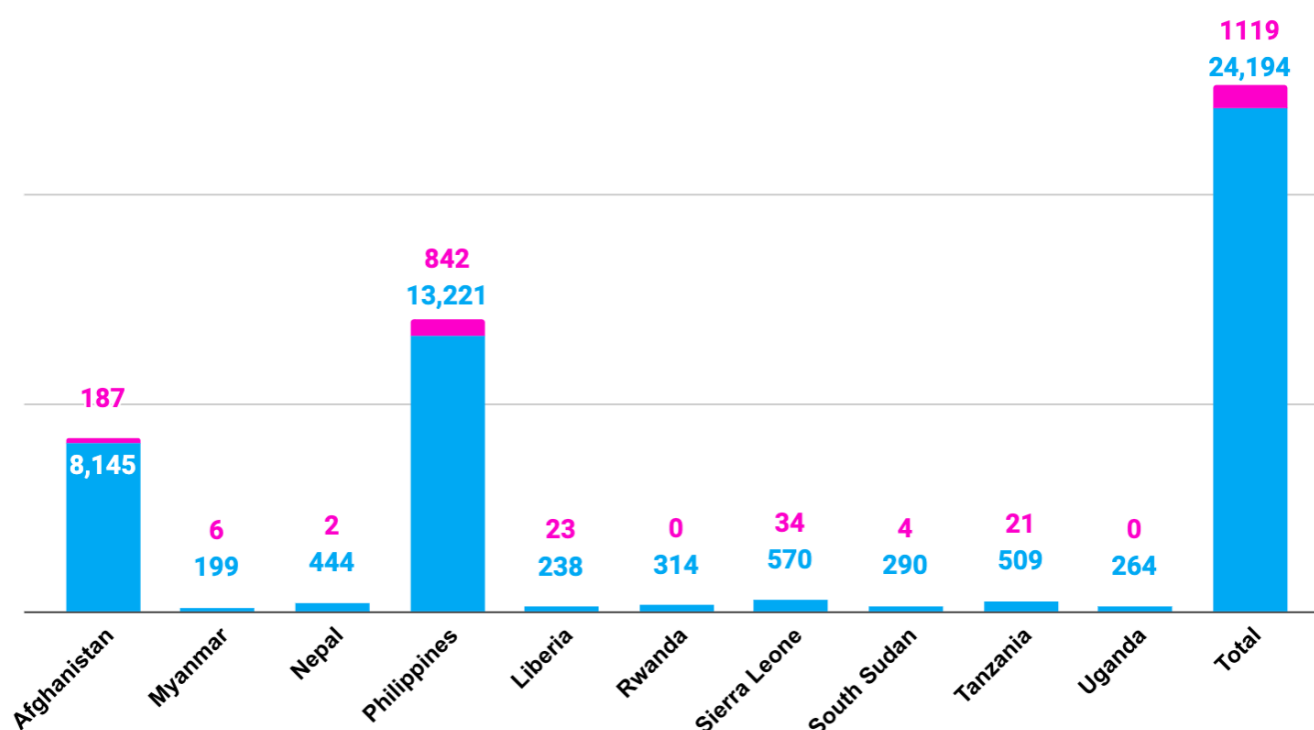
– Tariqul Islam, Ph.D.
Country Representative
BRAC Myanmar

At BRAC we are committed to helping millions of people become more resilient to shocks and creating pathways out of extreme poverty. We are standing with and working with those most affected and most at risk of being left behind to face the ensuing chaos. We urge major global actors, including governments, multilateral institutions, donors, NGOs, and policymakers, to develop responses that are bold yet responsive to changing landscapes and increasing fragility, immediate but developed for long-term impact, comprehensive to meet multidimensional needs, and designed with the poorest in mind.

OUR SITUATION

There is a significant increase in the new cases and death reported this week in the 10 BRAC International (BI) countries of operation. The total COVID–19 cases reported as of today is 24,194 and the total confirmed deaths is 1,119 (Source: Johns Hopkins University and Medicine, May 21, 2020, 11:32 GMT). The number of new cases reported this week is 5,188 and the number of new deaths is 142. This week, Nepal and South Sudan are among the new countries that have reported confirmed death cases for the first time. However, Rwanda and Uganda are still reporting no deaths.

Total Cases Vs. Total Deaths in the BI Countries



If we compare the report of cases and deaths amongst the BI countries, from last week and this week, the Philippines still remains the country reporting the highest numbers of cases and deaths in the Asia Region. However, in the Africa Region, there has been a shift to Sierra Leone, which is now reporting the highest number of cases and deaths. On a positive note, Tanzania reported no changes at all.

OUR REACH



41 million

people reached and sensitised
on COVID-19



906,452

life-saving information
materials distributed



228,143

face masks handed over to people
in vulnerable situations



93,036

bars of soaps distributed in
multiple communities

GOING HUNGRY TO SURVIVE THE PANDEMIC

My name is **Merciana Boniphace** and I live in Vingunguti in Dar es Salaam Region, **Tanzania** with my children. I have been a widow for 8 years now. I came to know about the BRAC Education programme through BRAC Tanzania representatives who came to enroll my daughter last year.

One of the challenges that I am facing during this time of crisis is providing for my family. It has become difficult to run my business due to COVID-19. To adjust the expenses, I had to change our meal plan by decreasing it from three meals per day to either two or even just one.

We are maintaining all the COVID-19 precautions as advised by our community leaders. We do not go out unless absolutely essential, and we always wear masks when we do. We wash our hands with soap and water if we step outside. The most urgent help I need now is food, so that my children don't go hungry.



AWARENESS: ONLY A CLICK AWAY

“Mass media is one of the most prominent avenues for sharing information nowadays. There are a lot of posts on social media sharing information on COVID–19; videos portraying how people deal with the pandemic; reports showing the increasing number of confirmed cases in the Philippines; and plenty of others. While these raise awareness, they also inadvertently instill fear among their readers, which may have an adverse effect on people’s psychological wellbeing,” Mohayma G. Talitig shared.

Mohayma, a thirty–year old resident of Marogong, Lanao del Sur, is a member of the **BRAC Philippines** Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) [Online Learning Community](#). As a participant, she said that the platform is very user–friendly and interesting. It uses eye–catching illustrations while still carrying the sense of urgency of an awareness–raising campaign. She also shared how the page helps in facilitating discussions, saying, “My friends and I would interact and have a lot of discussions about the lessons provided on the page.”

She added that her family members are learning from the content provided on the platform. “Recently, I watched a video on the [effective ways of hand washing](#) with my family, and my nieces and nephews also enjoyed learning from it,” added Mohayma.

COMMUNITIES STRIVING TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS

Shabana is a 13–year–old from Qaladar Khill Village, Kapsia province, **Afghanistan**. She is attending grade 8 at Nawsan Najmodin Shahid High School and comes from a large family of 10.

Shabana’s village does not have any televisions, satellites, internet or any form of media. Being virtually disconnected from the rest of the world, they had limited idea on what coronavirus is or the danger it is currently posing. After the BRAC Afghanistan team’s orientation in her village, she received the guidelines and became well informed about COVID–19 precautions. She has now voluntarily taken up the responsibility to spread awareness in her nearby communities to help keep everyone safe.





IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE PEOPLE OF THE ATTAWAR COMMUNITY

Attawar Community Development Council (CDC) is situated in the west of Kuz–Kunar district of the Nangarhar province, Afghanistan. There are 268 households with a population of 1580 in this CDC with only 254 and 84 educated males and females respectively. There are also 28 widows and 9 people living with disabilities.

The lockdown due to the pandemic has been particularly hard for this community as 60% of the people living under the poverty line are day laborers. They are currently jobless and finding it hard to feed their family. One of them said, “I don’t have any income now and I don’t have any savings either. I am facing food insecurity along with other economic challenges. We have nothing to eat and soon my family will starve.”

BRAC Afghanistan arranged a Project Management Training in the Attawar Community Development Council for three consecutive days and all the participants were given 100 Afghan Afghani (AFN) daily at the end of the training. The participants of the event were elated to get this opportunity. A participant said, “As we can’t go out to find work for many days due to coronavirus, we have nothing to eat. I am thankful to BRAC for giving me 300 AFN. This money will help me to support my family for at least some days.”

Many people are facing food insecurity and starvation in this community at present but there was not much hope of getting food or financial support from the government or non–government organisations until now. In this regard, another participant said, “If the lockdown continues and no support is provided by the government, we might have famine in the upcoming days; extreme poverty is bound to increase.”

UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES



Afghanistan: Although officially the lockdown in Afghanistan has been extended until May 24th, all major cities including Kabul are experiencing an ease in lockdown restrictions and people are going out in great numbers, leading to massive traffic in the cities.

With the rise in the number of infections in Kabul, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has announced that the Afghan Japan hospital, which is one of the standard COVID19 hospitals in Kabul, has reached its maximum capacity and cannot accept new patients. The patients are now being directed to Mohammad Ali Jenah hospital and Darulaman palace isolation center.



Myanmar: In Myanmar, 900 health workers and volunteers, and 450 inspection teams, swept through Yangon's Hlaing Tharyar township on May 16, randomly checking temperatures of about 150,000 people in their homes, in the street and at workplaces, as part of intensified measures to fight COVID-19. Health workers and volunteers also swept through four wards in Insein township. Mandalay authorities will be carrying out unannounced inspections on businesses, which have been allowed to reopen on May 16, to affirm whether health guidelines are being followed. Businesses that fail to follow the health guidelines the first time will be suspended for three days, second-time offenders will face a ten-day suspension and the third time will result in a suspension until further notice.



Philippines: Government officials have lifted the lockdowns in some regions, allowing some establishment and transportation services to resume operations. But some regions, particularly the nation's capital, are still under lockdown. However, as the people start to gather in public places again, it is expected to induce a second wave of the virus. The lockdown, which has been extended to almost 11 weeks, some of the strictest measures in the world, has taken a toll on the country's economy, which is why the Government decided to gradually reduce the restrictions with the hope of restarting the country's economy.



Rwanda: The Government of Rwanda has updated their directives on the restrictions to prevent an increase in the number of cases. They have announced that nationwide screening and testing will continue and that masks must still be worn in public at all times. It was also declared that all businesses that have resumed their activities must continue to follow the government sanctioned health guidelines. Digital payments must also be accepted by businesses as an alternative form of payment to ensure adequate social distancing. More details on the updated directives can be found on the website for the [Office of the Prime Minister, Rwanda](#).



South Sudan: The Government of South Sudan have confirmed two cases of COVID–19 inside a crowded UN civilian protection camp in South Sudan’s capital. Even though South Sudan was one of the last countries in Africa to confirm a case of the disease, confirmed cases are now rapidly on the rise.



Useful links

If you would like to find more detail about the current situation in each country, we recommend the following sources:

[Coronavirus COVID–19 Global Cases tracker](#)

Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University

[A selection of graphics: Tracking the global outbreak](#)

BBC News Website

[Key Economic Policy Responses to COVID19](#)

International Monetary Fund

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