GRATITUDE REPORT 2020

BRAC’S COVID-19 RESPONSE

BRAC is guided by a fundamental belief that people, empowered with the right resources, are the driving force of change in the fight against poverty. In the battle against COVID-19, we remain guided by this ethos. It is our hope that BRAC’s critical work to adapt and respond to this unprecedented challenge will resonate with the spirit of your giving.

From everyone at BRAC, thank you.
BRAC’S COVID-19 RESPONSE

CONFRONTING A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Globally, COVID-19 has overwhelmed health care systems, threatened livelihoods, and caused fatalities on an enormous scale. The impacts have been incredibly detrimental in BRAC’s 11 countries of operation; low-income countries where many live with already fragile health systems and livelihoods that are vulnerable to economic shocks. BRAC has engaged all of its frontline staff to raise awareness about COVID-19 and promote infection control practices — activities that are crucial in a situation with limited lines of communication and where misinformation can be deadly. BRAC has partnered with United Nations agencies, governments, and NGOs to coordinate and amplify efforts to manage outbreaks, provide essential food items, and work towards socioeconomic recovery. This report details some of these efforts, made possible by your support.

COVID-19 presents a dire challenge in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, the site of the world’s most populous refugee camps. With malnutrition common, health systems fragile, and access to clean water and sanitation facilities limited, all in an area of very high population density, COVID-19 has the potential to devastate these communities. In response, BRAC has enlisted volunteers, such as respected religious leaders, to lead demonstrations on proper handwashing techniques and hygiene and to spread public health messages. BRAC also began handing out soap, sanitizer, and masks; installing clean water sources; sanitizing shared hygiene facilities; constructing isolation and treatment centers; and distributing food aid and emergency cash support.

While the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the camps emerged in mid-May, fear, stigma, and rumors associated with the virus are widespread, keeping people with symptoms from coming forward. BRAC is working closely with partners to combat misinformation that contributes to these challenges while also delivering essential health services. BRAC also continues to provide important psychosocial support including counseling, safe spaces for women and girls, and domestic violence prevention activities to combat increasing reports of violence since lockdowns took effect.

HEALTH CARE

BRAC’s health programs have been instrumental in disseminating information about COVID-19, tapping into a network of over 100,000 Community Health Workers (CHWs) around the world. Trusted by their communities, CHWs are local women trained by BRAC to treat common medical conditions, promote healthy behaviors, and refer patients to more complex health services, as needed. In the face of COVID-19, these women have been BRAC’s primary force, training communities in proper hand-washing techniques and providing information on how to prevent the spread of the virus. Through the work of CHWs and other field staff, lifesaving public health messages have reached over 100 million people.

At clinics and while visiting communities door-to-door, BRAC’s staff wear personal protective equipment, adhere to social distancing guidelines, and have adopted low- and no-touch care approaches including mobile telehealth evaluations. This has enabled continued access to essential health care for children, pregnant and new mothers, and people dealing with malaria, diarrhea, and other infectious diseases. At the country level, BRAC is coordinating with government health ministries to test, contact trace, and isolate patients with COVID-19.

ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS

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EDUCATION

As COVID-19 forces school closures and interrupts education, BRAC is committed to ensuring children can still access safe and quality learning opportunities. BRAC is creating radio content to reach millions of children in Bangladesh, Tanzania, and Uganda with playful activities, storytelling sessions, and guidance for parents on child development and stimulation. BRAC has also trained staff to monitor helplines that support parents as they manage their children’s educations at home.

In Bangladesh, BRAC is working closely with the government to broadcast primary and secondary school classes on televisions across the country. BRAC has also been coordinating telelearning calls in groups of three to four students and their parents twice a week, reaching over 80,000 children. The calls build on students’ normal lessons, with the addition of health and hygiene awareness messages and psychosocial counseling activities, designed to help children cope with anxieties arising from the pandemic.

ULTRA-POOR GRADUATION

Through a proven sequence of interventions focused on building skills, assets, confidence, and social capital, participants in BRAC’s Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) program build resilience and place themselves on a pathway out of extreme poverty and into sustainable livelihoods over the course of two years.

As COVID-19 threatens decades of global progress on poverty, BRAC has adapted UPG to continue reaching its participants. Recognizing the need to provide immediate monetary support in the face of impending lockdowns and quarantines from COVID-19, BRAC has given direct cash transfers to over 350,000 vulnerable families, helping them to afford approximately two weeks of necessities. Personal coaches, who are a cornerstone of the UPG program, have continued monitoring participants either in person from a safe distance, through text or video messaging, or by asking neighbors to liaise where travel or technology is limited. While the focus of these meetings has shifted to incorporate health and hygiene information, these touchpoints have remained critical to seeing participants through this crisis with the support they need.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Microfinance is critical to ensuring that people working in the informal sector, such as smallholder farmers and street vendors, can invest in their businesses and meet day-to-day needs. Early in the pandemic, BRAC quickly halted loan and savings collection and took steps to provide flexibility for clients by waiving interest and offering revised repayment schedules. Subsequently, BRAC’s microfinance staff have focused on facilitating savings withdrawals, disseminating disease prevention messages, and distributing health supplies.

These actions have been informed by BRAC’s experience on the front lines of the Ebola outbreak in 2014 when BRAC took a similar approach in Sierra Leone and Liberia. After resuming normal operations, BRAC witnessed surprisingly high loan repayment rates of over 70 and 90 percent in Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively, driven by clients’ renewed trust in BRAC and strong desire to get their lives back on track.
BRAC is a global leader in developing and implementing cost-effective, evidence-based programs to assist the most marginalized people in extremely poor, conflict-prone, and post-disaster settings. These include initiatives in education, health care, microfinance, women and girls’ empowerment, agriculture, human and legal rights, and more. BRAC’s vision is a world free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination where everyone has the opportunity to realize their potential. In 2020, BRAC was named the number one NGO in the world by NGO Advisor for the fifth consecutive year. Founded in Bangladesh in 1972, BRAC currently operates in 11 countries in Asia and Africa, touching the lives of over 100 million people.

About BRAC USA

Based in New York, BRAC USA is the North American affiliate of BRAC. BRAC USA provides comprehensive support to BRAC around the world by raising awareness about its work to empower the poor in 11 countries and mobilizing resources to support programs. BRAC USA works closely with its international counterparts to design and implement cost-effective and evidence-based poverty innovations. BRAC USA is an independent 501(c)(3) organization.

We are efficient and effective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management &amp; general</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</tbody>
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BRAC USA’s 2019 fiscal year expense breakdown

We are highly ranked

In addition to being ranked the #1 NGO in the world in 2020 by NGO Advisor, GuideStar awarded BRAC USA its highest Platinum Seal of Transparency for financial transparency. We also score 100 out of 100 in accountability and transparency ratings from Charity Navigator.

GET INVOLVED

Your gift can make a difference.

Visit: BRACusa.org/donate
Email: info@bracusa.org
Call: +1 (212) 808-5615
Mail: BRAC USA, 110 William Street, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10038

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