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Coronavirus Puts 4 Million Girls at Risk of Child Marriage

School closures and loss of income due to the Coronavirus pandemic will put an additional four million girls at risk of child marriage in the next two years. In the next decade, 13 million additional child marriages will take place as efforts to stop them are disrupted, according to the **United Nations**. School closures not only restrict access to education, but they also place another economic burden on families who depend on mid-day meals in school. Without any end to the pandemic in sight, families see marriage as a chance to save money and make sure their daughters are placed in secure homes.

Girls Not Brides reported that organizations trying to address the problem are being constricted as governments restrict activities or redirect funding. **The UNFPA** predicts that if these disruptions and lockdowns continue, there will be 7 million unintended pregnancies in the 12 countries. Girls who have not yet had the chance to become women will become mothers. In this period, they also predict an additional 30 million cases of gender-based violence as people spend more time at home.

Adolescents in Emergency (AiE)

COVID-19: Children on the Frontline with Innovation

Adolescents and young age groups of the population are the potential workforces of a nation. Historically during any disaster or crisis moment, the youth and adolescents came forward with great enthusiasm, immense courage, self-dedication, empathy, and volunteerism to face it. COVID19 novel coronavirus transmission has emerged as a human disaster in Bangladesh. According to the age structure of the population, Bangladesh has a fairly young population with 34% aged 15 and younger and just 5% aged 65 and older. At present, more than 65% of our population is of working age, between 15 and 64 yrs. Within life-threatening COVID19 mass transmission, children are yet to be infected at a massive level by this time although the situation is changing. Thus Bangladesh is enjoying 'demographic dividend' in facing the COVID 19 pandemic.

For the prevention of COVID 19 during April-May-June'20, adolescent club members are taking various innovative initiatives under **KISHORE Network of the IECM program** in Charfassion, Bhola Sadar, and Monpura Upazilas. Such a great team of adolescents dedicatedly working to prepare Face Mask, Hand Wash, Face Shield, and Respirator by themselves to protect from a virus droplet infection.



Face Shield to Prevent COVID19



For COVID 19 prevention, COAST KISHORE Network team prepared sample Face mask, Hand Wash (HAT SAFAI), Face Shield and Respirator at Hazirhat Union in Monpura @ COAST

Child Marriage and Violence Increasing in Bhola during COVID19

Bhola was spotlighted for the **Child marriage pandemic** for a decade. Ongoing **COVID19 Outbreak** has been hastening the situation. School closures and loss of income due to the Coronavirus pandemic has put many girls at risk of child marriage. There are many children with vulnerabilities whose father & mother are separated or abandoned by them and grown-up by relatives or grandmother. Existing social power structure and family dynamics led this to a hectic condition. During April-May-June'20, some cases were reported that entails that child marriage and violence against children are increasing in Bhola.

Tabassum Tahira (15), a minor girl of class X and separated by her parents, living in the Police Line area of Bhola Sadar (Char Noabad) was reported that she had been forcefully married off to a madrasa teacher by her uncle at mid-night during CORONA. The COAST team reported the case to the respective executive magistrate & focal for Child Marriage of district administration. Then the police came and investigate and finally stopped the child marriage.



Rupa is telling her story of violence happened to her life after being child marriage@ COAST

Rupa Akhter (16), a poor minor girl of class X in Shibpur Union of Bhola Sadar, who had been forcefully married off to her relative. After marriage, she had been tortured, abused, and assaulted by her husband. Rupa get a divorce from her husband when it came to her unbearable. She left and took shelter from her parents. But this was not the end. Now, her divorced husband and so-called friends are continuously threatening her over phone and Text Message (Sexting). Rupa was a peer leader of the JAMUNA adolescent club and she reported the case to the Child Affairs Police Officer in the Bhola Sadar Thana.

The **KISHORE Network** was advised, trained, and guided by the IECM team through a series of virtual/video meetings from Bhola to Monpura using the internet, phone, and social media. Tutorial video on the hygiene kit and PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) were provided as referenced by whom standard and other doctors/scientist's instructions published.

Call for COVID19 Support from Adolescent Network:

For unlocking the potential and keeping the momentum of will spirit, adolescents need to engaged self-driven activities that evolve hands-on experiences and stay-at-home based Life Skill Education for health safety and voluntary 'work for the community'. For school closures, this is the high time to carrying forward such initiative and growing up the adolescent group as a responsible senior citizen.

COAST developed an Adolescent Network of 24000 adolescents enrolled and trained by the 864 adolescent clubs in Bhola Sadar, Lalmohon, Charfassion, and Monpura Upazila. In facing the COVID19 outbreak, the advanced adolescent group has put an appeal for the required material, financial and institutional support for preparing the COVID19 protection stuff by themselves

- Face Mask
- Hand Wash & Hand Sanitizer
- Bleaching Spray for disinfection of CORONA hot spots
- Face Shield and Respirator
- Awareness and Campaign
- Training and Virtual Telemedicine health services



KISHORE Network members bleaching spray to disinfect CORONA hot spots in Charfassion @ COAST

COVID19 Innovation: "SoaPen"

SoaPen's makeable soap is a subtle yet instructive way of cultivating the habit of handwashing among children. 'SoaPen is made with food-grade colors and, unlike hand sanitizers, is not harsh on the skin. This simple innovation can prevent 1.5 million child deaths every year & has UNICEF excited' as reported.



Cyclone AMPHAN Response



COAST distributed a package of humanitarian aid (Tk. 3000 cash in hand, water filter, soap and face mask for CORONA and other hygiene materials) to cyclone AMPHAN affected 1000 people in Monpura, Dhalchar, Char Kukri-Mukri, Charfassion, Lalmohon and Bhola sadar @ COAST

Fishing Ban Survey



Shamjan Bibi, a Women Fishermen of Bholar Khal in Shibpur, sail her boat up to Hatiya-Sandwip channel to catch fish. Fishing ban for deep sea fisher left her livelihood stuck and standstill as she didn't get any support neither from 45 kg. Rice scheme nor from the social safety net programme @ COAST

COVID19: Awareness through the Radio Listener Club

At the onset of the COVID19 pandemic situation, children are locked down at their homes amid school closures. For life-threatening COVID19 mass transmission, children's movement, regular education, sports, cultural activities, exercise & health, interactive discussion, etc. have come to a limited scale. Thus it could be brought upon the adverse effect on children. Realizing that the IECM team started communication with the 27 Radio Listener Clubs provided with LIFELINE Radio under Communication for Development (C4D) support.



Adolescents are listening radio programs @ COAST

After communication, adolescents are informed that a couple of programs are being broadcasted through the radio on CORONA health safety, hand washing, social distancing, sign & symptoms, test and treatment, emergency contact, and hotline numbers. About 1100 adolescents are now listening to special radio programs by expert doctors on COVID19 and participating in the phone-in programs of the Community Radio MEGHNA FM 99.00 and Barisal Betar FM 105.20 wave. They also enjoy a song, play, and weekly magazine programs this radio help adolescents to keep them updated by the news, national & international affairs, weather forecast, and signalling for disaster preparedness. During the super cyclone



Adolescents and Community people got the attraction of LIFE LINE radio programs in Charfassion @ COAST

AMPHAN, adolescent got the signal 10 for Bhola by this radio news and disseminate the message and awarded the community people to go for cyclone shelter and other safe places. The specialty of this LIFELINE radio i.e. it can continue programs without DC charge. Solar-powered electricity backed up the radio operation and when it comes to end another handheld dynamo can generate power to continue listening programs in the disaster-prone areas like Bhola. Radio Listener Clubs in the outreach Charfassion and Monpura areas also getting the benefit of the radio programs during the locked down for CORONA.