The BRAC Global Fund for COVID-19 Response
1) The Need: Protecting the most vulnerable

The rapidly expanding COVID-19 pandemic poses an unprecedented challenge. In addition to causing fatalities on a massive scale, the virus has the potential to severely overwhelm health care systems, significantly disrupt daily life, negatively affect livelihoods of families and their incomes and cause enormous damage to economies. All these factors will have a disproportionately negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of those living in situations of poverty, inequality, those vulnerable to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and exploitation, as we have witnessed in Africa and Asia where BRAC works. As an organization built on the principle of standing with the most vulnerable, particularly in times of crisis, BRAC is committed to supporting local communities and helping them respond to the outbreak initially with humanitarian interventions, but transitioning quickly to socio-economic rehabilitation and development programs in the coming weeks, months, and beyond.

2) BRAC’s impact and approach

BRAC has extensive experience in rapid-onset crisis response across many different contexts. It was on the front lines of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 and has built effective programming for refugees and internally displaced people in Bangladesh and South Sudan. Though Ebola is quite a different disease, there are many practices to stop its spread which are similar to COVID-19, like frequent handwashing and practicing social distancing. We are learning from case studies published by the Global Delivery Initiative on BRAC Microfinance’s response to the Ebola outbreak, and findings from the World Bank on how our Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents or ELA clubs helped adolescent girls in the wake of Ebola. “First, the Ebola crisis had a wide range of negative impacts on adolescent girls in the communities that were more disrupted. Second, the ELA program dampened the negative impacts of the crisis: helping younger girls stay in school (while working) and avoiding the increased likelihood of having a child.”

Since the first case was reported in Bangladesh, BRAC hand in hand with the Government is extending its support to aware the community about their health issues, ways in which the virus is transmitted, its symptoms, and the ways to detect and so forth. A network of community leaders, community development organisation members, health volunteers and health workers as well as BRAC’s programme and field organisers are the agents for this mass distribution. Furthermore, BRAC will upscale the sanitising facilities and awareness campaigns in 20 urban districts and has launched a program to provide cash assistance for emergency food support to 100,000 vulnerable families whose livelihoods have been impacted by the social distancing measures and other restrictions in place.

BRAC is known for its holistic approach where multiple causes of poverty are addressed with targeted interventions. As such BRAC delivers services that range from microfinance to education, healthcare to gender justice and empowerment and give people the tools they need to take control of their own lives. Through these evidence-based approaches BRAC has already reached 100 million people in eleven countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Liberia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. In addition, BRAC is also providing technical assistance to governments and NGOs elsewhere in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
3) BRAC’s strategy for COVID-19 response

Building on our existing in-country programs we will work alongside local and national government bodies and response mechanisms, as well as the private sector, while leveraging our deep organizational knowledge of crisis-response with our established networks in each country. Building off our established capacity, operational knowledge, and existing relationships and networks, we will use a four-pronged strategy to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. With this strategy BRAC aims to reach 20 million people in Africa and Asia with awareness raising activities and 500,000 people with economic rehabilitation activities after the crisis.

BRAC’s holistic approach means it engages across multiple sectors to support emergency relief and recovery, but will deploy interventions in the following priority sectors to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Community Based Health, Mental Health & Pscho-Social Support
- Education, Early Childhood and Adolescent Development
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- Livelihoods and pro-poor financial services
- Food Security and Nutrition
- Protection

BRAC’s Geographic Reach

BRAC has 11 operational countries in Africa and Asia with a fully-staffed country programme and branch office network over much of the countries, with a particular focus on isolated rural communities and marginalised urban settings. BRAC has over 100,000 staff globally.

BRAC’s operational countries are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) BRAC COVID-19 Emergency Fund

To implement the COVID-19 Response Strategy, BRAC launched a global COVID-19 emergency response fund. The fund aims to support the most vulnerable communities that will be disproportionately affected during but also after the crisis. In collaboration with the governments of the countries where BRAC works, the fund aims to create awareness and deliver services and support to the communities where we work in often hard to reach areas. In line with our four-pronged strategic response framework BRAC aims to raise USD $50 Million to support our efforts in awareness raising, prevention, and recovery.

BRAC’s four-pronged approach strategic framework for Covid-19:

![Four-pronged approach strategic framework for Covid-19]

Click here for the full version of BRAC’s Strategic response framework

Key interventions

BRAC’s holistic approach to poverty reduction means we work across multiple sectors with strong capacity across many areas that have the potential to make a significant difference to the course of the pandemic in our focal countries. Our key interventions will include:

Public Health and awareness

BRAC will utilise its cadre of over 60,000 community health workers worldwide to prevent the spread of the virus by promoting behaviour change practices amongst the communities and households they serve. These village based health workers have already been trained in best practices for preventing the spread of COVID-19 and will be equipped with appropriate personal protective equipment to ensure their own safety. BRAC will also mobilise its large network of field staff across all its programmes in a comprehensive effort to prevent the transmission of the Coronavirus. Our field network includes staff based in our rural microfinance branches, of which we have over 2,000 branches globally with 32,000 staff, along with our education, youth empowerment, livelihoods, agriculture development and emergency response staff. Together, they create a large network of over 100,000 staff living and working in the communities likely to be the most severely affected.

Education and child development

BRAC’s education programme is renowned for its innovation and scale of delivery in community based education, early childhood development and provision of education in fragile states. BRAC is also working to support Governments in all its countries to improve education quality. Currently there are over 3 million children attending BRAC schools worldwide. Whilst, BRAC schools have temporarily closed to reduce the transmission of Coronavirus, the teachers and BRAC field staff maintain regular contact with the children. BRAC will utilise partnerships such as our membership in the EdTech Hub to utilise technology to continue to provide education in BRAC schools, ELA Clubs, and support governments to use innovative technology to provide education for children and adolescents during these difficult times.

Food Security and nutrition

Recognising the potentially catastrophic impact on the livelihoods of the world’s poorest, BRAC seeks to partner with the World Food Programme to provide nutritious food to those most gravely affected by the crisis across our country operations. We will utilise our existing network of rural offices as distribution networks to ensure adequate nutrition in the hardest hit communities during the pandemic.
Supporting the recovery of communities and economies

As the pandemic passes BRAC will shift its focus to supporting the recovery of communities. Our approach will draw upon our successful experience in West Africa supporting the recovery of communities from the Ebola disease crisis in 2014 and 2015. BRAC will also apply its Disaster Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (DRVA) approach which has become an integrated activity in all food security and livestock-related projects of BRAC International through successful piloting in PRO-ACT project in Liberia. The Government of Liberia and the EU have recommended similar assessments all over Liberia as part of all future development projects.

Economic recovery

In BRAC’s operational countries small and micro businesses, largely in the informal sector, are the backbone of the economy. BRAC has relationships with nearly 6.5 million business people worldwide through our microfinance network, of which the vast majority are women (Bangladesh 85% and elsewhere in Asia and Africa 97%). BRAC will work to support these people to build back their businesses in the aftermath of the crisis through the provision of recovery loans. These will be made available to existing BRAC clients and new clients in dire need and enable their businesses to get up and running quickly, and in turn these businesses will play a critical role in helping communities to recover from the pandemic. BRAC will also support young people to re-engage with productive employment and self-employment after the crisis through our skills development and youth programmes and other support they may need to ensure they can retrieve or create income opportunities.

Ultra-Poor Graduation

It is widely expected that the pandemic will result in the numbers of people living in extreme poverty to increase. To address this challenge and to support people to climb back out of extreme poverty BRAC will deploy its proven Ultra-Poor Graduation approach to provide an intensive package of support to the most vulnerable.

5) Governance and Accountability

Contributions to the BRAC Global Fund for COVID-19 Response will be held in a dedicated fund managed by BRAC International. Funds will be distributed to BRAC country programmes to support interventions that are assessed to have the most impact in helping countries and communities deal with the specific challenges they face. The Fund will be governed by a steering committee consisting of senior leadership of BRAC who will decide which interventions to support, in which countries, by assessing global need, resource availability, capacity, and impact.

Donors will be provided with the following information products about the progress being made with the Fund and the developing impact of COVID-19 in the affected communities:

Weekly situation reports

✓ Providing on-the-ground, up-to-the-minute updates, insights and reporting about the impact of COVID-19 and BRAC’s work to address it.

Monthly webinars by BRAC leadership Weekly situation reports

✓ Leaders of the BRAC response to COVID-19 will provide a monthly in-depth briefing on progress and challenges on an invite only webinar for donors to the BRAC Fund.

Quarterly and annual narrative and financial reports

✓ To provide detailed written updates on BRAC’s progress made in addressing COVID-19. Additional reports can be provided upon request.

One-to-one briefings and online drop in sessions

✓ With key BRAC staff leading the response will be undertaken on a regular basis to enable donors to discuss the work being done with their support.

BRAC’s dedicated COVID-19 Response website

✓ Will be regularly updated with data, briefings and stories from the field.