COVID-19 RESPONSE
(Up to July 31, 2020)

Bangladesh, a lower-middle-income economy with one of the world's densest populations. Social distancing is difficult in many areas of the country, and with the minimal resources the country has, it would be extremely challenging to implement the mitigation measures. The situation in Bangladesh is still alarming, and it is comparable with many other countries which have lately seen a devastating impact from the virus. Poor and marginalized people are sufferers from the virus including daily wage earners, Hijra, sex workers, disable persons, transport workers, garments workers, ethnic people etc are facing range of challenges and difficulties in accessing and ensuring their day to day basic necessities.

As part of COVID-19 response, Light House has taken measures to save both community people and staffs from the virus. Ensured hand wash point at office and community, ensure hygiene kits, mask, gloves, gowns, goggles and other PPEs. Light House continued to provide health services at the field level, Doctors Helpline, enhance mental health counseling, distributes food support to most affected marginalized groups, step up fund raising, collecting information from field and enhance networking to ensure relief for its beneficiaries including all sex workers and Hijra as well continued awareness raising among the community and beneficiaries through different modalities.
Food Support Distribution:
Light House in association with “German Doctors” and icddrb disbursed the food support among Hijra and MSWs its 18 working districts. “German Doctors” a humanitarian aid organization has provided the financial support which was arranged by icddrb to provide emergency food support relief as immediate responses needed by grassroots Hijra and Male sex workers (MSWs) who are significantly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and impact of corresponding government lockdowns. With these food support Light House fulfill demand of livelihood support alongside of health services. “German Doctors” support BDT-15,01,916 to provide food support among 1303 Hijra and MSWS. Beside, Light House its own initiative ensured food support to 111 female sex workers of Dhaka and under the project supported by UNFPA, ensured food support 394 brothel based female sex workers and their children (Children: 90 and FSW: 304). Foods were also distributed to 600 community people of Bogura town and Kazipara of Kahaloo Upazila with contribution Light House staffs. The food support includes rice, pulse, (dal), potato, Onion, salt, and cooking oil and for children ensured suji; milk, biscuits, etc.

Relief ensured through networking and Communication:
The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 crisis is now open to all and seen globally. Millions are staying home without work and income and government mobilize significant resources to support communities impacted. However, it is likely that there may be possibility that most marginalize and vulnerable group will not be listed in the priority list due to their fear of disclosure of profession to others. Light House Offices and service centers located in 29 districts took measures to listed down those to share with government authorities and NGO for ensure relief to most needed. Light House GF-MSM and Hijra project ensured food relief and cash incentive for 2,230 Hijra and MSM, 4,659 sex workers from DC/UNO/LEB/DSS offices and NGO. Besides, total of BDT 68,51,000 has been distributed among 6132 families of Rajshahi by the Community Action Group (CAG) under govt. cash transfer initiatives. 80,716 kg rice has been distributed among 10,689 peoples at Rajshahi under the networking of DARAU project.

Dialogue with stakeholders:
Under the COVID-19 response grant, Light House with technical assistance from Counterpart International organizing online/virtual dialogues with different stakeholders with the objective of Establish alternative mechanisms for collecting information and subsequent dissemination, focusing on the increased risks of COVID-19 pandemic and related human rights violations; and Conduct oversight on government service delivery and monitor the human rights aspects in the district of Rajshahi, Natore and Bogura. Light House has already conducted several dialogues where The Member of Parliaments from Bogura, Natore and Rajshahi, Districts commissioners, Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO), Local Government representative, local elected bodies, District level officials of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Civil Society Organizations, and print and digital media participated the event as well. So, far 109 stakeholders participated in different dialogues.

“Corona situation has made my life in a living hell. It feels like dying is easier than trying to stay alive. The DIC give me hope to live and support” Julia, (19) Cox’s Bazar.
Health Service provided:
Light House has been working in 29 districts to provide health services to poor and marginalized communities including sex worker, MSM, Hijra, urban poor, adolescents, children and Rohingya. Most of the doctor of Light House has completed online training on COVID-19 and operate health services in their service centers. 9, 894 Families of Light House 29 working districts gets maternal and child health services, STI, Cervical cancer, pregnancy etc. Besides Light House provides need based health services to 3,060 Hijra and MSM, 8,048 FSW in 29 project districts by it project Health Care Providers.

Counseling service provided: (Including mental health):
COVID-19 has created uncertainty, lockdown measure lead many to isolate from the love one, social distance and restriction pose lonely and impact create panic and fear among the community and beneficiaries. During the period, Light House’s trained counselors were active to listen their voices and provide them distance counseling and mental health and psycho-social supports among female sex workers, MSWs and Hijras. Light House team counseled 3060 Hijra and MSWs, 8802 FSWs and 3,878 persons under different project. Light House trained MHPSS counselor were given mental health and psychosocial support to 521 beneficiaries.

SRH and HTS done: (STI, RTI etc.):
As per direction and guidance from National AIDS and STD program, Light House service centers from FSWs, MSWs and Hijra were open in 29 districts by maintaining social distance and hygiene practice. At the same time, it has provided services urban poor people in Rangpur City Corporation through its clinics. Till July 6, 035 FSWs were given treatment for various diseases (STI, General Ailment, MCH, MR etc), 8,850 FSWs were tested for HIV, 3,060 Hijra and MSM were tested for HIV and 1,651 STI and 1,703 General health case treated with free medicine.

Cash distribution:
“Thanks to almighty that UN Women have distributed taka 3055/- which was very supportive for us. For this financial support, me and my family could enjoy the festival. I did send some money to my family members. I cannot explain my happiness!”-- Mim (33), a brothel sex worker from Jamalpur

The COVID-19 pandemic had led governments of several countries impose lockdowns to prevent the spread of the virus. The lock downs have restricted the mobility of the population. It also effectively closed down brothels, causing many sex workers to lose their clients and daily income. Considering the fact, Light House in association with UNFPA took initiative of distributing cash support through mobile banking to the selected FSWs of five brothels at Banishanta (Khulna), Daulatdia (Rajbari), Patuakhali and C&B Ghat and Rothkhola (Faridpur) on June 2020. A total of 479 FSWs received taka 1227/- each through mobile banking among brothels sex workers. Total 5,87,733 Taka has been distributed through bKash.

Besides, UN Women has been distributed cash through mobile banking to the Brothel based FSW of Jamalpur and street based sex worker of Kurigram district in July 2020. A total of 188 FSW received taka 3055/- each including mobile banking charge. A total of 4,06,315 taka has distributed to sex workers.
Fund Raising/contribution collection:

Considering the unprecedented impact on the communities around and the beneficiaries working with, takes initiatives to rise found to support those in need during the pandemic. Light House begins an emergency relief mechanism which we, voluntarily and collectively created to provide immediate responses needed by grassroots key populations who are significantly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and corresponding government lockdowns. To create this emergency relief mechanism, we have voluntarily donated parts of staff’s salaries. The relief mechanism was created in April 2020, Light House has so far able to raised fund BDT-96,57,048 for food support & cash transfer to beneficiaries and advocacy and motoring COVID-19 pandemic in it working areas. On other hand, Light House has already awarded BDT-37,50,000 to transfer among the project beneficiaries of MIF funded “Responsible” project under “Excluded People’s Rights” programs. UN Women has provide BDT-148. 07748 ($1,74,414) for create awareness on COVID-19 and prevention and response on GBV for Ruhinga people and host community of Cox’s Bazar district.

Awareness & Miking campaigns for awareness rising on COVID-19:

As of today, there is no hope for any vaccines for coronavirus, only self awareness is key to control the spread. So, Light House has been working to create awareness among the project beneficiaries and communities through one to one and group education sessions. Staffs are taken initiatives distributes leaflet among the staffs, beneficiaries as well as among the community around. Besides, it has taken initiative of miking on the COVID-19 messages and how to maintain social distancing. Till July 2020, it has distributes 78,584 pcs leaflets among the community people and beneficiaries. Peer Educators and health workers have disseminated awareness message regarding safety caution of COVID-19 among 66,948 beneficiaries by maintaining proper social distance and other protective measures. On other hand more than 25,047 people were reached through 10 face book live program on Corona, Mental Health and Pregnancy and 8 online advocacies on corona and drugs.

Under “Promoting Peace and Justice-PPJ project, Light House has been conducting miking campaigning for awareness rising on COVID-19 in Tangail and Bogura districts. This miking campaigning has done during Kurbani Hat and Bazar areas at Kahaloo, Dhupchachya, Sonatola Upazila—where 53,000 male and 52,000 female (estimated) were reached. On other hand, miking campaigning has done at Hat and Bazar of Tangail Sadar, Basail, Delduar Shakhipur and Bhuypur and reached 90,400 male and 82,100 female (estimated). Till date 279,500 people were reached through Miking campaigns for awareness rising on COVID-19 at Bogura, Tangail districts. Besides, Urban Primary Health Care Service Delivery Project: UPHCSDP-II conducting miking regularly to create awareness on COVID-19 in all 33 wards of Rangpur City Corporation. It has done 10 days continued miking and reached 140,000 (estimated) people of Rangpur city.
Doctors Helpline:
Considering the prevailing situation and address the needs of the community, Light House has developed help line pool with its doctors and medical assistants. Medical team has already providing services. For wider coverage and helping community, Light House made public of this medical team help line. This helpline pool is now available on face book. Doctors are regularly coming to face book live to answer questions of project beneficiaries and general public. After introducing helpline so far 1,183 calls were received and addressed their issues of COVID-19 by our doctors.

Online advocacy:
Light House is one of the leading organizations who work for legal service promotion, ensure sex workers rights, drug abuse prevention, developed CBOs and take stand to the people’s sides in needs. During the corona pandemic most of the advocacy was stopped. Due to that Light House takes initiatives to conduct online advocacy initiatives wisely using social media platform. Light House conducted series of online advocacy on Drug Abuse issues during COVID-19 pandemic. With efforts a total of 25,047 people and stakeholders were reached.

Bio-Safety and Protection: (PPE including Hygiene kits-purchased and distributed)
Light House ensured PPE for the field staffs. The PPEs includes masks; hand sanitizer, hand rub; apron, goggles, tissue role; liquid soap. Beside had washing facilities ensured at the entrance of all 68 drop-in-center/health facilities. So far Light House has distrusted 74,445 pcs of PPE and Hygiene kits including Surgical mask, cloth mask, filter mask, Disposable gloves, Disposable head cap, Disposable gown, Hexisol, Sodium hypochlorite solution , Kitchen towel, Liquid Soap, Mackintosh, Goggles, OT Cap, Utility gloves, Gumboot Shoe, Disposable Shoe cover, Detergent Powder and Infrared thermometers.

Light House working areas
Light House has been working and implementing different projects in Dhaka city, Dhaka district, Bogura, Naogaon, Joypurhat, Pabna, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Sirajganj, Natore, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Kurigram, Barisal, Patuakhali, Khulna, Bagherhat, Jashore, Satkhira, Magura, Kushlia, Dhaka, Tangail, Faridpur, Rajbari, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Sherpur, Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Cox’s Bazar, Chattagram, Sylhet, Rangamati, Moulibazar, Sunamganj, Banderban, Noakhali, Khagrachari, Hobiganj, Netrokona, Munshiganj, Jhalokathi, Pirojpur, Bhora, Kishoreganj, and Gaibandha districts of 8 divisions of Bangladesh.

“Coordination gap and scarcity of resources led to push back to address this pandemic. We have Lack of resources, but we are trying hard to reach the goal through better coordination and solidarity, but the transparency is highly needed at all level” - Ms. Most. RounokZahan, UNO, Gabtioli, Bogura

We have delayed to address COVID-19 issue, every person of the groups need to come forward to address this pandemic together irrespective of the political parties and ideologies. Mr. G.M Siraj, honorable member of the parliament, Bogura-06
Light House acknowledges contribution of donors for COVID-19 pandemic response: