Special Risk Communication and Community Engagement efforts to combat COVID-19 in border adjacent communities in Southern Bangladesh

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Background

• Significant increasing trend of COVID-19 patient during 2nd wave of COVI-19 in April 2021 in border districts
• Mass movement during Eid festival
• Cross-border trade and transport
• Overcrowded business transactions at local markets
• Several land ports were open
• Reluctance in mask wearing and other COVID-19 protective behaviours
COVID-19 Behavioral Assessment Findings in Border Districts: May 2021

### Mask use rate in the different hotspots and border areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus &amp; Rail station</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea-stall</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transport</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bazar</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Border areas</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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### Key findings from the observational study on Mask Wearing and Physical distancing:
- 2 of every 3 people wear masks. However, a substantial differences in mask wearing observed in border adjacent hotspot areas.
- People wear mask the highest (79%) in the public transport while the lowest (only 24%) in the tea-stall
- The rates of wearing masks by the people are 59%, 62% and 72% in the bus & rail-stations, bazar and public places in the border areas, respectively.
- 16% Poor maintenance of physical distancing in border hotspot areas

### KII findings: Non-Compliance of using Mask:
- one-third of the key informants, opined that breathing induced irritation with masks, lack of habituation, submission to the fate and superstition are the major barriers to wear masks.

### Recommended messaging channels:
- Locally socially influential, respectable people to promote health safety measures
- Street miking, drama, distribute leaflets, poster, miking, public lectures and other available means could boost people’s awareness toward the importance of maintaining health safety measures.
**Evidence Generation:**
Behavioral assessment and sharing findings with all relevant stakeholders for collective actions

**Social Mobilization and Multi-stakeholders Engagement:**
For continuous coordination and collaboration with local partners and stakeholders in RCCE initiatives

**Community Engagement, Consultation and Feedback:**
To promote protective behaviour and to readjust localized community engagement and messaging

**Tailor made messaging and channels:**
To ensure messages and materials are contextualized for the communities and relevant partners
Stakeholders Analysis in Border areas

**Tertiary**
District administration, Border Guards, Health Department officials, Law enforcement team, District level corona management committee members etc

**Secondary**
Upazila Administration, Local market management committees, transport management owners, mosque management committees, local elected leaders, Imams, LGI representatives etc

**Primary**
Border adjacent communities, businessmen and customers in local marketplaces, transport drivers and assistants coming from neighboring country, inter-city transport workers etc

Multi-stakeholders Engagement

District Administration advocacy meeting with BGB, Transportation Owners, Religious Institutions

Upazila Administration advocacy meeting with Market management committees, Religious leaders, LGI representatives

Sensitization Meeting with Transportation Workers
Key Result

• District and Upazila Administration with Local Government institutions played key role
• Border guard, inter city transportation owners, Market management committees, Mosque management committees have been advocated to reinforce the protective behavioral messages
• Border guards mobilized to reinforce proper use of mask in marketplaces and local hat bazars in border areas
• Bus drivers and helpers sensitized on protective behaviours and on interpersonal communication to encourage people to wear mask in mass transportation and to maintain physical distancing and hand washing
• local market owners and Local Government Institutions mobilized communities to continue messaging from strategic locations in border and hotspot areas

DHIS 2 data showed significant decrease of COVID-19 cases in intervention areas from Aug-Nov 2021
Discussion