COVID 19: A fight against the Pandemic as well as Infodemic

COVID 19 has spread over many countries in the world and at the same time a lot of rumors and misinformation has also been spread. Risk communication and community engagement activities are one of the most significant priorities for battling the misinformation. As part of this, more than 40 partners of the CwC Working Group (CwC WG) are conducting a wide range of COVID 19 preparedness and response activities across the 34 refugee camps and Bangladeshi communities across the Cox’s Bazar district or Bangladesh. These include community awareness sessions, neighborhood-based inter-personal sessions, broadcasting through local cable TV network, film/video/animation show, radio broadcasting and listening group sessions, loudspeaker messaging (on mobile vehicle as well as static), visual materials like posters, leaflets/pamphlets, banners, arts, murals, etc., information hubs/service centers/help desks, short message dissemination through telephone hotlines/IVR, Social Media campaigns, WhatsApp Groups etc.

As a CwC actor, Christian Aid, in partnership with Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), has strengthened the communication with communities (CwC) actions to raise awareness and disseminate information on COVID-19. Everyday communities from both camp and adjacent host community visit the health facilities to access health services. As a strategic service point Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), identified these facilities as potential places for information dissemination. In almost all health facilities there is a mechanism (video projector or laptop with sound box or simply loudspeaker) to play the audio/video messages recommended by CwC WG/developed by CwC WG partners. Christian Aid, in partnership with Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) has used those mechanism at the health facilities to remove misconception, make people aware on COVID 19 risks and inspire them to take measures to mitigate those risks. One of the Rohingya service recipients- Emam Hossain (35) has explained the effectiveness of those audio messages in his own words.

“I used to visit DAM’s health post in Camp 12 for health-related issues. At health post, I consult doctors and receive health advice and medicine. Before my consultation with the doctor, normally I have to wait for my turn sitting in the waiting area. When I visited the last time, as usual, the staff there played the audio speaker and I heard the audio messages on COVID 19 in my own language. I learned about what is Coronavirus and what we should do to reduce the risk of this disease etc. The staff also demonstrated us how to wash our hands and explained the importance of wearing a mask, maintaining social distance, cough etiquette, importance of staying at home, and not going outside unless it’s an emergency.”

He added “Before going to the health post, I had some misconceptions about COVID. I thought that the Coronavirus is just a propaganda of non-Muslim and it will not affect Muslims. But now, I understand that it is not a fake story. It is a real risk, and anyone can be infected by the Coronavirus. If we follow the advice, which I heard from the audio messages, we can save our lives.”

Emam Hossain is now optimistic that the proper information and health guidance can play a critical role in reducing the risk of COVID 19. He says, “I believe, everyone will follow the instruction of the authority, and we will be saved from Coronavirus by following the instruction, In Shab Allah!”

END