Project Title: COVID19 - PTIB

Project/Award ID: 00086326
Covid-19 Output ID: 00121478

Expected UNDAF/CP Outcome(s): No 2: Develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups.

Expected CPD Output(s): Output 2.1: Civil society, interest groups, relevant government agencies and political parties have tools and knowledge to set agendas and to develop platforms for building consensus on national issues.

Initiation Plan Start/End Dates: 1 May 2020 to 31 December 2020
Implementing Partner: UNDP

PTIB COVID-19 Response was an initiative to expand Partnership for Tolerant, Inclusive Bangladesh-PTIB’s monitoring, analysis and resilience activities to get insights and trends in social tension around the COVID pandemic and intervene through resilience activities.

Building on its key interventions and within its programmatic framework of PTIB, the IP aimed to addressing COVID-19 in an inclusive manner to mitigate sources of tensions; contribute to mainstream social cohesion and conflict sensitivity; help address issues pertaining to stigmatization and discrimination and enable society to maintain peace and tolerance with activities centered around common bonds shared values, and diverse Bangladeshi identity.

The IP supplemented the two key PTIB outputs of Research Facility and Citizen/Social Engagement.

Output 1 RESEARCH FACILITY: Research data and analysis produced on violence, misinformation and social tension around COVID and COVID response

Output 2 CITIZEN/SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: Inclusive awareness campaign to promote social cohesion and solidarity, and to counter discrimination and stigmatization related to COVID19 implemented.

Results and progress

Output 1 RESEARCH FACILITY:

Through the project, Government, UN agencies, development partners and local media are provided with data evidence on the social and political impact of Covid19 outbreak, which is shaping the Covid19 policy conversation in the country to mitigate social tension, stigmatization and discrimination emerged around the pandemic. The data analytics has proven useful to guide
the national COVID response pillar 5: Social Cohesion and Community Resilience. It is also proven significant to media and thus made national headlines.

PTIB’s long investment in research, monitoring and immediate adaptation of these facilities toward C19 worked well in producing Covid19 data analytics. The project’s three data units, Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO), Cox’s Bazar Analysis and Research Unit (CARU) and SecDev were quickly engaged in monitoring the social fallout from the pandemic, tracking violence, rumour, stigma, misinformation and incitement of all kinds, and released 62 reports to date of 3 different types.

Output 2 CITIZEN/SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT:

One million audiences have been reached through UNDP’s inclusive social cohesion awareness campaign online. It has helped to address issues of stigmatization and discrimination and enabled society to maintain peace and tolerance with activities around common bonds shared values, and diverse Bangladeshi identity.

PTIB’s strong online presence, popularity among youth, and introducing a diversity focused component worked well in addressing violence, stigma and incitement as Covid19 spreads.

The Digital Peace Movement (DPM) comprising Digital Khichuri Challenge and Peace Talk Cafe has seamlessly transitioned online, continuing its stride toward consolidating peace and harmony in digital space. The newly added online platform of Diversity for Peace (D4P) launched multiple online awareness campaigns, events, and competitions, tapping into target groups of marginalized sections. DPM and D4P has focused on dismantling negative narratives surrounding Covid19.

Key Partnerships

**Universities/Research Institute:** PTIB’s COVID-19 data analytics built on its in-house research unit and technical facilities of two existing partners- BPO of Dhaka university and data analytics agency, SecDev. Utilizing capacities of existing partners worked well in producing research data and analysis. BPO’s open access database on 26 categories of violence has been extended with an additional category of COVID-19 [[R1]]. SecDev’s monitoring of Violent Extremist (VE) narratives online has been added with COVID-19 related misinformation, hate speech and incitement.

**CSOs/NGOs:** Diversity focused awareness campaign was organized with CSO partners of ethnic minorities, disabled and transgender communities. Building digital capacities of CSO partners worked well because it brought them into online platform and enabled them to organize online awareness campaign on C19 and related social tensions.
Leaving No One Behind

**Gender:** Project’s partner BPO analyzed and disseminated the COVID-19 impact on Gender-based Violence (GBV) and disseminated it in PeaceGraphics. Based on BPO findings, the UNDP organized a stakeholder discussion online that reached over 5,000 viewers. Synergy between PTIB project components, BPO and Diversity for Peace worked well in bringing the GBV issue in a data centric advocacy discussion. UNDP’s support to BPO helped in the GBV analysis while the online platform of D4P brought it to a discussion engaging relevant stakeholders.

**Ethnic minorities:** The project produced and disseminated COVID-19 awareness messages in two indigenous languages and in sign language for those with hearing disabilities. The campaign reached to over 200,000 audiences. Introduction of the Diversity for Peace (D4P) component worked well for this inclusive campaign as it partnered with indigenous and disabled people’s organization.

**Digital Solutions: Data Collection System**

The BPO data platform introduced a separate window for COVID-19 under the “Cross Cutting” section. It facilitates ease access for the users to get Covis19 data on sub-categories, period and location basis. The platform uploaded validated data under Covid19 categories.

BPO has consolidated data on Covid19 related social tensions, standardized and aggregated them, and performed visualization and analysis out of those data. BPO was equipped with GIS-based mapping and data analytics technology that informs users on the state of violence and social tension related to Covid19 based on period, geographic distribution, and type of violence. Users can view trends, rankings, agents, and impact of violence in terms of death, injury, arrests and property damage. The data can be filtered and downloaded from the BPO and used in any third-party tools to get further insights.

UNDP’s capacity support to BPO through appointing a Data Scientist and additional members in data collection team worked well. With the technical support of Data Scientist, BPO was able to make a quick adjustment of the system for Covid19 data.

**Lesson learned and Way Forward**

**Social protection - uprooting inequalities**

Demographic bias of online users limits the inclusiveness of project’s social media campaign:

To leave no one behind we need to combine online with offline campaigns; only 41% of 163 million people in Bangladesh have access to the Internet. Of the 66 million internet
users in the country, approximately 36 million (22% of the population) are also subscribers to social media. men represent over 78% of all social media and Internet users in Bangladesh. 60% of the population lives in rural areas where Internet coverage is not universal. This means that the majority of those who are digitally connected are young, urban, and male. Therefore, the project is exploring how social media campaigns can have a role-on effect of youth, taking the work further off-line with community level activities, moreover, explore how off-line activities can be organized in addition to social media campaigns.

**Gender:**
The GBV discussion involved women rights activists, women from disadvantaged, marginalized groups and academicians. However, it could have been more impactful if it had involved policy makers and other relevant state actors.

**Staff issues, including work life balance and psychological issues**
Some social events amongst staff could help in reducing stress from monotonous work online: Working from home has been effective, made the project keep momentum, and with the COVID 19 response even increased its outputs. However, staff have been working for long hours, often emails are sent late at night and in weekend days. It seems harder to disconnect from work, while working at home. The team meetings and communications within colleagues have been mostly tasks oriented with little social interaction. Project will explore to organize different meetings or events where social interaction can take place and discussions are not just about tasks and results.