Ramadan and Eid during COVID-19 Pandemic

Eid-ul-Fitr, an Islamic holiday that follows a month-long fasting ritual of Ramadan, is considered to be one of the biggest festivals in Bangladesh. It is not celebratory only for Muslims, but also for people who belong in other religions. This year, Ramadan and Eid were celebrated in a muted fashion under the pall of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I could not buy new clothes for my only baby girl this year as due to the pandemic I have very limited scope to earn and am still passing days consuming less” said Mominur, a barber from Nageswari, Kurigram.

Previously I used to buy Iftar from outside for my family. This year, due to the pandemic my wife made the iftar items at home which seemed to be healthier and cheaper” shared Anar Ali from Bakshiganj, Jamalpur.

During Ramadan Muslims fast till dusk – their first meal for breaking the fast is called Iftar. Food vendors, sell various traditional items for this. Something that is enjoyed by people of all religions from every corner of the country. People invite their neighbors and loved ones for Iftar parties. This year most people refrained from meeting outside on the occasion of Iftar and purchasing Iftar from outside.

People also refrained from saying prayers at the mosques, they opted to pray at home. The Taraweeh prayers and the Eid prayers were not held in their usual manner. Eid prayer jamaat at the Eidgahs or open spaces was much different than usual. Social distancing was maintained inside the mosques and people were not engaged in the traditional form of greetings by embracing each other after prayers.
Since the COVID-19 outbreak in Bangladesh, SHOUHARDO III has commenced its COVID Response Activity from April 2020. SHOUHARDO III has been providing support to the health facilities in the most remote locations of the program, as well as providing cash support to people via mobile financial service, bKash. During May 2020:

- Constructed 122 handwashing stations
- Distributed 107 thermal scanners to 5 upazila health complexes
- Distributed 244 liquid soaps
- Distributed 488 antiseptic sprayers
- Distributed first tranche of cash (6,000 BDT/ 72.29 USD) to 5054 participants out of 12000
- Disseminated voice messages and Public Service Announcement (PSA) over local radio

Responding Cyclon Amphan

From May 20th to 21st, super cyclone Amphan passed over and caused widespread damage in Eastern India. In some parts of western Bangladesh, bordering with India was also hit by it. Though the southern part of Bangladesh was affected the most, some SHOUHARDO working areas in the north, including Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Sirajganj districts also experienced adverse weather. Light to heavy winds and rainfall caused damage to matured paddy that was soon to be harvested.

Days before the cyclone hit, SHOUHARDO III involved the Union Disaster Volunteers to spread messages in the communities through loudspeakers and mosques about the upcoming storm and how to prepare for it. A special weather advisory was sent as voice messages to about 37,000 participants of the three districts for ensuring cyclone preparedness.

Avoiding Eid congregations, people spent the day with their family members at home. For the poor Eid was especially different, not only for the safety issues but also due to their lack of income.

“Receiving BDT 6000 was great support for my family during this pandemic situation. I purchased a goat with two kids with the money hoping to get benefited soon,” shared Rafikul Islam from Char Rajibpur, Kurigram.

“I had crops in the field which was to be harvested in two weeks. The continuous heavy rain and wind made a great portion of paddy fall and one-third of the paddy got damaged,” shared Sohidul from Chauhali, Sirajganj.

This Eid was totally different from that of previous years. We said Eid prayers in a mosque instead of Eidgah. We didn’t visit any relatives as we did previous years,” said Babu from Belkuchi, Sirajganj. 