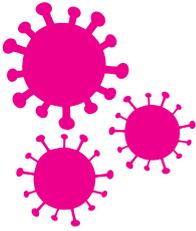


Guidelines for Journalists and Media Professionals

Reporting on

Covid-19

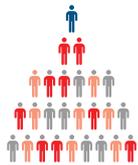
What is Covid-19?



COVID-19 (sometimes called 'Coronavirus') is a disease caused by the novel coronavirus first identified in Wuhan, China. It has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) -- 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. COVID-19 is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

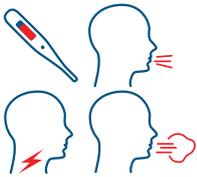
COVID-19 was confirmed to have spread in Bangladesh in March 2020. The first three known cases were reported by the country's Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) on 7 March 2020. Since then, the Government of Bangladesh along with key development partners, national and international NGOs have started taking all out measures to contain the spread of the virus, while keeping media and the public informed.

How does Covid-19 spread?



The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing), and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus. The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days (depending on the type of surface), but simple disinfectants can kill it.

What are the symptoms?



Symptoms can include high fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the common cold, which are a lot more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.

How can I avoid the risk of infection?



Wash your hands regularly with **soap** and **water**



Cover our mouth and nose while **sneezing** or **coughing**



Avoid close contact with anyone who has cold or flu like symptoms



If you have any fever, cough and difficulty breathing, **seek medical care early**

Why is accurate reporting so important?



There are a lot of myths and misinformation about COVID-19 being shared both online and offline – on how it spreads, how to stay safe from it, and what to do if one is worried about having contracted the virus. Journalists and media in Bangladesh like elsewhere around the world, have a critical role to play. They must inform the public about coronavirus, how to avoid the risk of infection and how to respond to it. They also have an important role in ensuring that the information they provide is accurate and objective.

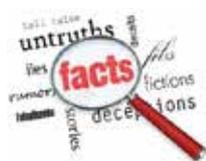
Professional reporting on COVID-19

Be accurate



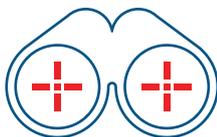
Do your best to ensure what you write is fair, accurate and evidence-based. Fact-checking COVID-19 stories is important. Only trust information provided by official sources such as the Government of Bangladesh and its relevant ministries and expert sources from Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) which gives daily updates on the COVID-19 situation, or UN agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO) or the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Only quote experts after checking they are genuine experts (e.g. verify their background, online publications, etc.) Proactively engage and establish contacts with known designated public health officials and UN agencies to obtain verified information.

Fact-check information



Verify any message you receive via SMS, WhatsApp or social media, even if they claim to be from a trusted source (Government, UN agency). You can verify information on the official websites and social media platforms of the Government and of UN agencies. Be aware that some fake messages containing misinformation about COVID-19 are being circulated in the name of UN agencies. Therefore, any information you receive via SMS, WhatsApp or social media must be fact-checked to ensure that it does come from a valid source. Don't hesitate to call up the official spokespersons of the Government or of UN agencies to verify the information.

Debunk myths



Do not relay rumours and hearsays. Do not relay myths related to the prevention and transmission of COVID-19, for instance people claiming to have found a miracle cure which has not been scientifically verified or unsubstantiated claims of number of infections and casualties. Only seek comments from a qualified, credible, objective public health professionals or/and medical practitioner who have the required expertise in virology and are working on COVID-19. But here also, verify their background first.

Keep language simple. Ensure accurate language and terminology.



Use everyday language to help people understand COVID-19. Professional or scientific words may sound authoritative, but do not be afraid to ask for clarification. Explain clearly and in simple words to people how the virus is transmitted, and how they can protect themselves and their families from it.

When reporting on COVID-19, language is extremely important. Journalists should be particularly careful to get scientific and statistical information right, and to use correct terminologies.

Respect privacy.



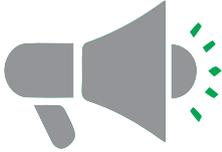
The privacy of people who were tested positive to COVID-19 and those around them – their families, friends and colleagues – should be respected. Identities, addresses, family backgrounds, personal and medical records of infected people should not be disclosed, or even hinted at, without permission. Photos and videos of patients should not be printed or broadcast without permission.

Do not discriminate



Someone's age, sex, ethnic background, religion, legal status, disability, marital status and sexual orientation should only be mentioned where they are directly relevant to a story. Irrelevant references trigger stigma and discrimination. Do not associate COVID-19 with any location, country and region, nationality and ethnicity – the virus can affect people of any background, nationality, race, religion, gender or ethnicity.

Avoid sensationalism



Resist the temptation to sensationalize issues in ways which could be harmful. Sensational language and images can create unnecessary anxiety leading to widespread panic and public hysteria. Do not use discriminatory, derogatory, threatening and sensational language and tone while communicating and reporting on COVID-19.

Encourage people to adopt the right behaviours

Teach people how to protect themselves from COVID-19, such as:

-  Wash your hands frequently using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
-  Cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of used tissue immediately.
-  Avoid close contact with anyone who has cold or flu-like symptoms.
-  Seek medical care early if you or your child has a fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
-  Stay home as much as possible. Avoid shaking hands and hugging. Avoid going to crowded places. If you or someone you know have signs and symptoms of the corona virus infection, seek early medical care and follow the health care provider's advice.
-  Be cautious, but do not panic – 80 per cent of cases of coronavirus are mild; most people who are infected recover.

Useful links:

<https://corona.gov.bd/>

<https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

For more information, please contact:

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