SANEM
Thinking Aloud

Editor's Desk

The February 2021 issue of Thinking Aloud focuses on "COVID-19 fallout on poverty and livelihoods in Bangladesh". The first page article titled "Strategies to tackle the pandemic induced poverty in Bangladesh" highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented rise in poverty in Bangladesh in a very short time-span. The article emphasizes that strategies of poverty reduction in Bangladesh should involve non-conventional approaches to poverty reduction. The management of COVID-19 crisis and economic recovery should be the priority. Given the extreme uncertainty in the global market for the export sectors to bounce back, a strong focus should be on the recovery of domestic-market oriented economic activities. Also, the social safety net coverage, including direct cash transfer and food assistance to the poor, should be widely expanded. There should also be non-conventional, urgent and targeted programs to address the agonies of the students with highly disrupted educational activities during the pandemic. Finally, government policy response should also address the current labor market challenges. The second and third pages of this issue presents the article titled "COVID-19 fallout on poverty and livelihoods in Bangladesh: Summary findings of SANEM's nationwide household survey in November-December 2020". The article presented the results from SANEM's nationwide household survey which was conducted from 2 November to 17 December 2020 to ensure sustainable and evidence-based development pathways in the post-COVID context. Hence, the article attempted to understand the impact of COVID-19 on PIE (Poverty, Inequality and Employment), which remains an essential prerequisite to assess the pandemic's multidimensional impacts on people. The article was based on a research with primary purpose of capturing the overall differences in the status of PIE among households between pre-COVID and post-COVID times. The survey questionnaire contained questions related to income, employment, education, expenditure, remittances, experiences with COVID-19 aid and social protection programs. Since the households used in both surveys are same, a panel data has been formed, which is extremely beneficial for such analysis. No systematic bias in response or attrition from the survey was found. To measure the pandemic's impact on poverty, the study team followed Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach. The study team updated the poverty line incomes (both the lower poverty line and the upper poverty line) based on the 2018 Household Survey conducted by SANEM and adjusted it for adequate inflation. The article concludes that the first-hand numbers from field that this survey came up with can assist the policymakers to adequately revise the strategies and devise short- and long-term policies as required. The fourth page draws attention to the events that occurred in the month of January along with the details of the upcoming Bay of Bengal Economic Forum 2021 which will be held on 8-11 February, 2021.

Inside this issue

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Strategies to tackle the pandemic induced poverty in Bangladesh

Selim Raihan

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented rise in poverty in Bangladesh in a very short time-span. SANEM's household survey in November-December 2020 indicates that the poverty rate in Bangladesh increased from 20% in 2019 to 42% by the end of 2020. There is no denying that the decade long success in poverty reduction in Bangladesh is under threat.

There are a few reasons behind the sudden and unprecedented rise in poverty in Bangladesh. First, the lockdown during March-May 2020 and the disruption of economic activities since the onset of COVID-19 resulted in unmatched havoc in the economy. This havoc created a large labour market disruption as many people either lost their jobs or earned less. Though the lockdown had discontinued since June 2020, the economic activities are yet to return to normalcy. Two rounds of SANEM's business confidence survey of firms from major economic sectors in Bangladesh in July and October 2020 showed that majority of the firms held the view of a slow economic recovery. Second, the COVID-19 also registered distressing effects on the export-oriented sectors. In 2020, the dominant export sector, the readymade garments, saw the unprecedented sharpest fall in export earnings by 17%. Recent surveys suggest that a large number of workers in the readymade garments sector also lost their jobs. Most of the other export sectors are also awfully affected. Third, despite that, the official remittance inflow surged in 2020, SANEM's household survey showed that more than 80% of the remittance-recipient households reported receiving less remittance during this period. This phenomenon indicates the possibility that the total amount of inflow of remittances, channelled through both the formal and informal means, might have declined during most of the months in 2020. Informal channels of remittances remained clogged during the pandemic time, and the demand for informal remittances also fell due to the sluggish trade and tourism activities. All these phenomena contributed to the sudden rise in poverty during the early months of the pandemic. Also, a high poverty rate persisted even by the end of 2020.

There are two pertinent questions related to the sudden jump in the poverty rate in Bangladesh. How quickly will the new-poor return to the non-poor status, i.e. will the poverty reduction be slow or rapid? And what strategies do we need to counter the high rise in poverty?

The pace of poverty reduction, whether it will be slow or fast, will depend on the features of new-poor and the type and speed of economic recovery. SANEM's recent household survey results show that a large proportion of the new poor is concentrated in the SMEs and services sectors. The pandemic forced people, employed in the urban service sectors, to be badly hit. As most of the jobs in the urban services sectors are informal and job security is virtually absent in these engagements, the pandemic left no option for these people but to be overburnt by the heat. Also, the SMEs, despite that they are among the most affected sectors, haven't been adequately supported through the government's stimulus packages. The larger fraction of the stimulus package announced for the SMEs by the government remained unutilised as most of the SMEs are outside of the formal banking process, and no alternative mechanisms were put in place for them. SANEM's two rounds of business surveys found that the economic recovery process for the SMEs remained slow.

Now, the question of the strategies of poverty reduction should involve non-conventional approaches to poverty reduction. Four major strategies should be in place.

First, the management of COVID-19 crisis and economic recovery should be the priority. Given the extreme uncertainty in the global market for the export sectors to bounce back, a strong focus should be on the recovery of domestic-market oriented economic activities. In other words, the policies and strategies for economic recovery should have a high priority for the revival of domestic-market oriented economic activities. The SMEs, in particular, should be given the topmost importance. One important point to ponder is that even if we see recovery in the export sectors, the positive effects of the recovery in exports, in terms of generating economic growth and reducing poverty, may remain weak for a long time due to the broken or suppressed supply chains in the economy. It should also be noted that, due to such re-orientation of policies and strategies, the economic growth is likely to be much lower than the official target. However, under the current crisis, even a low economic growth, based on the revival of domestic economic activities, can be robust, and it can lead to better distributional impacts during the recovery phase. Nonetheless, for better management of COVID-19 crisis and for ensuring a robust path to economic recovery there is a need to address the institutional and governance-related challenges with utmost importance.

Second, the social safety net coverage, including direct cash transfer and food assistance to the poor, should be widely expanded. However, there is a critical political-economy issue related to the management of this expansion of the social protection programmes since the country spends very low on social protection as a percentage of GDP. Also, there are large loopholes in social protection programmes in the forms of leakage, corruption, wrong targeting and mismanagement. Therefore, there is a need for strong effort, especially for making the social protection programmes effective through identifying the poor and vulnerable population, and ensuring that the support reaches the poor people.

Third, as poor people, to cope-up with the crisis, are making intergenerational adjustments by rearranging their priorities, i.e. spending low on education, health and entertainment, they are sacrificing prospects for better health, better education and a better life. Students from distressed families are likely to bear a higher burden, and many of these students may permanently be out of the education system. Therefore, non-conventional, urgent and targeted programmes are needed to address the agonies of the students from these families.

Fourth, government policy response related to the current labour market challenges has remained weak and inadequate. The new-poor, with highly disrupted engagements in the labour market, are not covered in the existing social safety net programmes. Therefore, the government should introduce new social safety net programmes targeting the labour market. In this context, the employment guarantee scheme, for a certain period for vulnerable people, can be seriously considered. The government should also form a Labour and Employment Commission to assess the current unprecedented situation and suggest necessary measures.

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COVID-19 fallout on poverty and livelihoods in Bangladesh: Summary findings of SANEM's nationwide household survey in November-December 2020

Selim Raihan and Mahtab Uddin

Until the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020, Bangladesh made an impressive reduction in the poverty rate from as high as 56.7% in 1991-92 to 20.5% in 2019. Despite this remarkable alleviation, most of the people who graduated remained close to the poverty line income – thus remained as the vulnerable poor. In the pre-pandemic situation, nearly half of the population in the country were within the threshold of vulnerable poverty. Given this context, any major economic shock, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is obvious to leave dents on the progress achieved in alleviating poverty over the past decades. To tackle the pandemic's multi-dimensional ramifications on the economy, particularly on Poverty, Inequality, and Employment (PIE), a thorough assessment is warranted. SANEM, through a nationwide survey in November-December 2020, aimed to fulfil this objective.

occupation, household's main income sources, distribution of the households by income deciles, and education level of the household head. A comparison was made for the households who were covered in 2020 with the households who were not covered, and the overall distribution of households surveyed in 2018 based on the observable characteristics. In all the parameters, the covered households' attributes appeared the same as the non-covered households without any statistically significant difference showing no systematic bias.

The 2020 survey questionnaire included questions pertinent to households' basic characteristics, education, employment, COVID-19 led major challenges and coping strategies, social protection, health, migration, and remittances along with pre-COVID and during-COVID household income and expenditure information. For better comparison, the pre and post-COVID-19 impacts on PIE for these 5,577 households were compared.
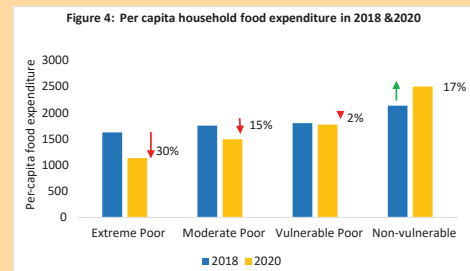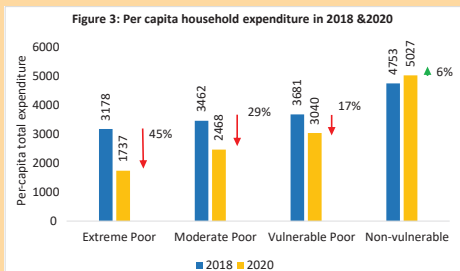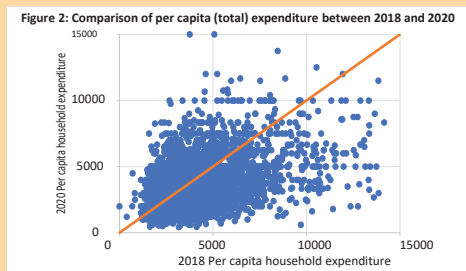
Impact on poverty: Using the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) method, the upper and lower poverty lines for 20 strata (eight rural, eight urban, and four metropolitan areas) based on the 2018 survey

higher poverty rates than the eastern divisions. The highest poverty rate was observed in Rangpur (57.3%), followed by Rajshahi (55.5%), Mymensingh (46.2%), Khulna (41.8%), Dhaka (38.4%), Chattogram (35.1%), Sylhet (35%), and Barisal (29.3%).Given the panel dimension of the dataset, the dynamics of new poor were further delved - who fall back and who graduated out of poverty (Table 2). Households who were extreme poor in 2018, 46.2% of them remained extreme poor in 2020 (top left box in Table 2). Interestingly, 15.8% of these households graduated to upper poverty, 17.7% moved to vulnerable poor category (where the vulnerable poverty line is defined as 1.25 times the UPL), and the rest moved to non-vulnerable non-poor category. Contrastingly, among the moderate poor households in 2018, 41% of them fell back to extreme poverty. Another 18.7% of these households moved up to the vulnerable poor group while 22.9% graduated to non-vulnerable non-poor category. The largest dip in poverty is seen for the households who were vulnerable poor in 2018: 34.8% of them fell back to extreme poverty while another 14% fell back to moderate poverty. In the case of non-vulnerable non-poor households,

Figure 1: Trends in poverty rates

Table 1: Poverty rates in 2020 by divisions (%)
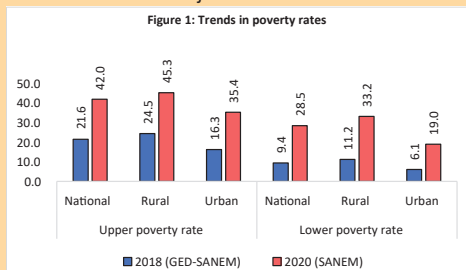
Division	National		Rural		Urban	
	UPL	LPL	UPL	LPL	UPL	LPL
Barisal	29.3	20.2	2 6.9	20.8	36.0	18.7
Chattogram	35.1	1 8.8	40.9	22.3	24.7	12.4
Dhaka	38.4	28.8	45.1	40.3	30.8	15.8
Khulna	41.8	27.9	41.5	27.1	42.6	30.6
Mymensingh	46.2	38.9	49.6	42.5	35.6	27.8
Rajshahi	55.5	37.4	53.8	41.7	60.4	24.8
Rangpur	57.3	37.4	57.9	38.8	54.9	31.9
Sylhet	35.0	27.4	33.8	26.3	38.1	30. 2

Table 2: Dynamics of new poor: graduation and fallback

		Status 2020				Total (%)
		Extreme-Poor	Moderate-Poor	Vulnerable Poor	Non-Vulnerable	
Status in 2018	Extreme Poor	46.2	15.8	17.7	20.3	100.0
	Moderate-Poor	41.0	17.4	18.7	22.9	100.0
	Vulnerable Poor	34.8	14.0	21.4	29.9	100.0
	Non-Vulnerable	20.0	12.0	18.1	49.9	100.0

Figure 2: Comparison of per capita (total) expenditure between 2018 and 2020

Figure 3: Per capita household expenditure in 2018 &2020

Figure 4: Per capita household food expenditure in 2018 &2020

Source: SANEM Household Survey 2020

The 2020 survey is built on a survey conducted by SANEM in 2018. SANEM, in collaboration with the General Economic Division (GED), Planning Commission, conducted a nationally representative survey of 10,500 households in 2018. To understand the impact of the pandemic on PIE in the pre and post COVID-19 periods, SANEM attempted to reach all 10,500 households from the 2018 survey. As the pandemic is still on, SANEM conducted the survey over the phone. Amongst the 10,500 households, SANEM successfully interviewed 5,577 households from 500 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) distributed across eight divisions, 64 districts. The survey non-response was 10%. The team could not reach the rest 37% of the households due to network condition, language barriers, wrong numbers, amongst others. Given such attrition, closer attention was provided to analyse whether there was any systematic bias in the attrition or success rate.

There was no systematic bias in the attrition: A careful checking for the bias was done based on several observable characteristics of the households such as sample distribution by divisions and regions, sex of the household head, household head's main

dataset were calculated. Each of the poverty lines was then updated to 2020, adjusting for inflation following a systematic approach. In updating the poverty lines for changes in inflation rates between 2018 and 2020, rural, urban and metropolitan areas were given differentiated weights. The updated upper poverty line (UPL) per person per month for rural areas ranged from Tk. 2246 (Barisal) to Tk. 2936 (Dhaka). For the urban areas, it ranged from Tk. 2604 (Khulna) to Tk. 3322 (Dhaka Metropolitan). The rural lower poverty line (LPL) ranged from Tk. 1912 (Barisal) to Tk. 2561 (Dhaka), while the urban LPL ranged from Tk. 1953 (Rajshashi) to Tk 2800 (Sylhet). Based on the updated poverty lines, it was found that the upper poverty rate almost doubled from 21.6% in 2018 to 42.0% while the lower poverty rate tripled from 9.4% to 28.5% (Figure 1). The poverty rate expanded faster in urban than in the rural areas. In the urban areas, the upper poverty rate more than doubled from 16.3% to 35.4% while in the rural areas the rate climbed up from 24.5% to 45.3%. In the case of lower poverty, the rate tripled in both rural (33.2%) and urban (19%) areas compared to the respective rates in 2018. A regional pattern also emerged (Table 1): the western divisions registered

20% fell below the extreme poverty line, 12% fell below moderate poverty, and 18% became vulnerable poor.

The aforementioned dynamics of falling back to poverty are primarily linked to the households' sharp income/expenditure falls in 2020. A large number of the households experienced the fall in their per capita household expenditure, in absolute term, in 2020 compared to the respective levels in 2020 (Figure 2). The greatest fall in per capita expenditure was observed for the extreme poor households (45%) followed by moderate poor (29%) and vulnerable poor households (17%) (Figure 3). Conversely, non-vulnerable non-poor households had an increase in per capita expenditure by 6%. The extreme poor and moderate poor households cut through their food-expenditure (30% and 15% respectively) as well as their non-food expenditures (63% and 49% respectively) (Figures 4 and 5). While the vulnerable poor households also cut in both food and non-food expenditures (17% and 2% respectively), the non-vulnerable households increased their food expenditure (in absolute term) by 17% compared to that in 2018.

For a better understanding who were the new-poor,

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households were categorised as "old-poor" and "new-poor" depending on whether they were already poor prior to the pandemic or whether they had fallen below the poverty line during the pandemic. Figure 6 suggests that in the "old poor" household category, 37% of household heads were self-employed, 20.5% were wage-employed, and 39.5% were day labourers (Figure 6). In contrast, in the "new poor" households, 42.3% household heads were self-employed, 23.9% were wage-employed, and 30.2% were day labourers. For the main source of income, among "old-poor" households, 43.4% relied on agriculture, 5.2% on the industry, 46.5% on service, and 3% on remittances (Figure 7). In contrast, among "new-poor" households, 36.6% relies on agriculture, 6.4% on the industry, 51.2% on service, and 3.2% on remittances.

Impact on inequality: The consumption expenditure Gini coefficient increased from 0.31 in 2018 to 0.33 in 2020. Such an increase in inequality primarily originated from the fall in income (expenditure) for the poorer income (expenditure) groups compared to the richer groups (Table 3). The ratio of income shares between the richest 5% and poorest 20%

Not to mention, the poor households spent only a fraction of the expenditures incurred by non-poor-non-vulnerable households on education and healthcare.
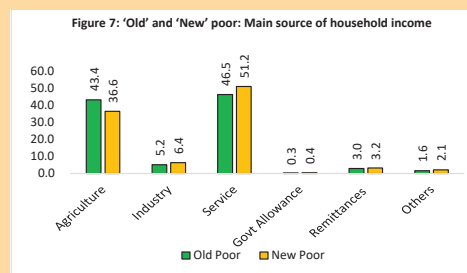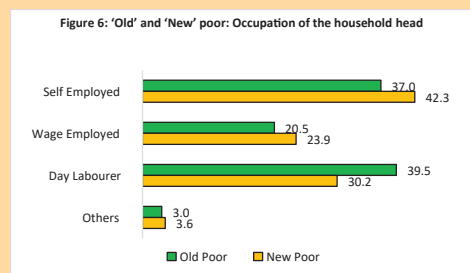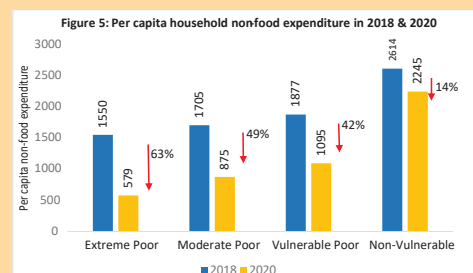
There appeared a digital divide too. The access to online/TV education was also largely heterogeneous (Figure 8). Only 21% of the households reported that their children could participate in online/TV education. The gap between the rural and urban areas is noteworthy - 19% and 27%, respectively. The digital divide by poverty status is also clearly evident. In oppose to 26% of the non-poor households, only 15% of the poor households reported that their children participated in some forms of online/TV education. Nevertheless, less than a third of the respondents mentioned online classes as effective. Regarding the reasons behind not joining the online/TV classes, the respondents mentioned the unavailability of online classes (49.1%), no access to technological devices (6.1%), insufficient access to devices (5.3%), inadequate access to internet connection (5.4%), inability to bear the cost of internet connection (6.5%), amongst others.

Alarmingly, around 3% of the households responded

October 2020, the main income earners across all employment categories experienced a fall in average incomes: the decline was 32% for self-employed, 23% for wage-employed, 29% for day labourers, and 35% for other categories.

The occupational mobility across industries was also observed between 2018 and 2020. In 2018, agriculture was the main source of income for 26% of the households followed by the services sector (46.4%), industry (17.4%), and remittances (8.6%). In 2020, 29.4% of the households relied on agriculture as the main source of income, while the dependence on services sector and the remittances declined to 44.7% and 4.9% respectively. Moreover, in 2018, 57.3% of the households' main earners were engaged as self-employed, which declined to 45.1% in 2020. Compared to 2018, in 2020, the main earners' occupation share in the wage-employment category increased by nine percentage points to 27.6%.

Impact on the remittances: a paradox? Is there any paradox in the remittance inflow in 2020? The official foreign remittance receipts soared even during the pandemic. However, in this survey, 82.1% of the

Figure 5: Per capita household nonfood expenditure in 2018 & 2020

Figure 6: 'Old' and 'New' poor: Occupation of the household head

Figure 7: 'Old' and 'New' poor: Main source of household income

Table 3: Ratio of richest 5% to poorest 20% (income and expenditure)

Income/ Expenditure decile	Income share (% of total)		Expenditure share (% of total)	
	Feb 2020	Oct 2020	2018	2020
Richest (5%)	15.82	15.86	12.9	13.92
Poorest (20%)	7.72	6.47	9.6	6.47
Ratio	2.05	2.45	1.34	2.15

Source: SANEM Household Survey 2020

Figure 8: Participation in the online/TV classes

Figure 9: Employment challenges faced since March'20 (% of HH)

households increased from 2.05 in February 2020 to 2.45 in November 2020. Correspondingly, the ratio of expenditure share of richest 5% to that of poorest 20% increased from 1.34 in 2018 to 2.15 in 2020. In fact, the expenditure share of the richest 5% households increased by 1.02 percentage points even weathering this pandemic, whereas for the poorest 20% it declined by 3.13 percentage points. One critical point to remember that since most ultra-rich households could not be included in the survey, the real impact on inequality might be much larger than those found in the survey.

The rise in inequality didn't contain to income only. There was a widening gap in investment in human capital (education and healthcare). Overall, the average per capita education expenditure fell for all households between 2018 and 2020. However, the fall was as high as 58% for the extreme poor households, followed by moderate poor households (41%) in contrast to non-vulnerable non-poor households who cut it down only by 9%. Also, while the average per capita health expenditure increased for all households, the least increase was for the extreme poor (only 3%). The largest increase was for the non-poor non-vulnerable households (104%).
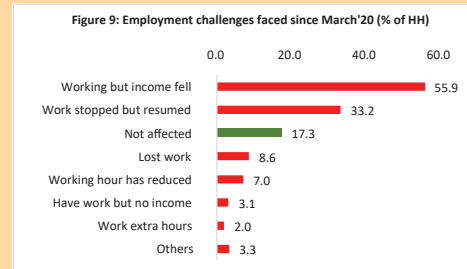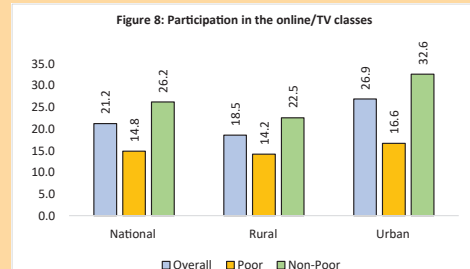
that they were not sure about continuing the education of their currently enrolled children (rural 3.7%; urban 1.4%). The rate was the highest for Sylhet (4.71%), followed by Khulna (4.7%), Barisal (3.4%), Dhaka (2.9%), Chattogram (2.8%), Rangpur (2.8%), Mymensingh (2.7%), and Rajshahi (1.5%). Reasons for not continuing education included unaffordability of the households to continue (national 68%; rural 67%; urban 73.7%), being already involved in economic activities (national 17.2%; rural 17.5%; urban 15.8%), and being married (national 9%; rural 13.6%; urban 5.3%), amongst others.

Impact on employment: The impact on employment was not homogenous for all households. Among the surveyed households, 55.9% responded that despite being employed, the household's main earner's income had fallen since March 2020 (Figure 9). Around 8.6% of the households claimed that they lost work during March-November 2020, 7% claimed that working hour was reduced, and 33.2% reported that their work stopped at least for a while during the outbreak. Only 17.3% households responded that they were involved in economic activities without any disruption. Between February and

foreign-remittance receiving households claimed that they received less remittances during the months between March and November 2020. Only 0.3% of the households reported experiencing a rise in remittance incomes. A fall in the amount of internal remittances was also observed: 64% of such remittance-receiving households claimed that they received less during most of the months in 2020 compared to what they received in the pre-pandemic months. A possible explanation for this paradox is that a substantial amount of remittance was received through informal channels prior to the pandemic. Since these channels had been blocked as well as there had been incentives from the Government of Bangladesh, a large proportion of sent remittances took the formal channels diverting from the informal routes (like Hundi). Moreover, many workers lost their jobs in the overseas markets, faced pay-cuts, many could not repatriate back to work due to travel bans, amongst other challenges.

Households' coping strategies: More than two-thirds of the households responded that they faced several critical challenges during the pandemic.

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Among these households, around 1.3% responded that their family suffered due to COVID-19 infection or death of any family member due to coronavirus (rural 0.95%, urban 1.9%). Serious illness or death of any earning member of the family (not from COVID-19) was a major challenge for 5.7% of the surveyed households. Nearly half of the households responded unusually high price of daily necessities as a major challenge (rural 50.1%, urban 48.7%). Amongst other major challenges faced by the households included: income of the main earner of the family stopped (national 15.6%; rural 14.1%, urban 18.3%), and distraught due to floods, landslides or river erosion (national 13.25%, rural 16.1%, urban 7.6%). In reaction to the crisis, households adopted a variety of coping strategies, often from multiple sources such as borrowing (48.7%), reliance on savings (32.4%), reduced expenditure on non-food items (27.3%), involuntary change in dietary patterns (27%), donations from friends/relatives (16.7%). Alarmingly, 7.5% of the households responded that they could not cope with the problem at all. Regarding getting supports from private or public organisations during the pandemic, 32.9% households from the poorest expenditure quantile reported that they received some forms of support (cash or in-kind) from private organisations, while 25.9% received benefits from government initiatives. For the richest expenditure quantile, the figures were 24% and 15.54% respectively. When the households were further asked whether they found the government supports as sufficient, only 22.1% of the households perceived such support measures as sufficient. About the ability to cope with the COVID-19 induced crisis and return to the normalcy, only 27.2% expressed optimism.

Lastly, five key suggestions emerged from the respondents: (i) better management of the COVID-19 crisis, (ii) increasing social safety net coverage including direct cash transfer to the poor, (iii) price stability of essential products, (iv) reduction of corruption, and (v) creating employment opportunities.

In conclusion, this survey comes up with first-hand numbers from the field that the policymakers can take on the table to adequately revise the strategies and devise short- and long-term policies where required.

This summary is based on the presentation made by SANEM on 23 January 2021. The presentation of the survey findings dissemination could be found at https://tinyurl.com/y62hc6pw

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e-version: http://sanemnet.org/thinking-aloud/

BAY OF BENGAL ECONOMIC FORUM 2021

"Post-COVID Challenges in the Bay of Bengal Region"

8–11 February 2021

DAY 1: 8 FEBRUARY 2021

6:30 PM – 08:00 PM: Welcome Session

DAY 2: 9 FEBRUARY 2021

11:00 AM – 01:00 PM: Inaugural Session & Keynote Address by Professor Rehman Sobhan
02:30 PM – 4:00 PM: Organized Session: Digital Connectivity and E-Commerce
04:30 PM – 06:00 PM: Organized Session: Trade and Regional Value Chains
06:30 PM – 07:30 PM: Paper Presentation (Trade)
07:30 PM – 08:30 PM: Paper Presentation (Regional Cooperation)

DAY 3: 10 FEBRUARY 2021

11.00 AM – 12:00 PM: Paper Presentation (Health and Education)
12.00 PM – 1.00 PM: Paper Presentation (Employment Challenges)
2:30 PM – 4.00 PM: Organized Session: Regional Connectivity in Bay of Bengal Region
6:30 PM – 08:00 PM: Organized Session: Deepening Health Sector Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal Region

DAY 4: 11 FEBRUARY 2021

11.00 AM – 12:00 PM: Paper Presentation (Macroeconomy)
02:30 PM – 4:00 PM: Organized Session: Tackling Post-COVID Challenges in the Bay of Bengal Region and Meeting SDGs
4:30 PM – 6:00 PM: Organized Session: Strengthening People to People Contacts
06:30 PM – 08:00 PM: Closing Session

For more information, visit our website:
https://sanemnet.org/bay-of-bengal-economic-forum-2021-post-covid-challenges-in-the-bay-of-bengal-region-8-11-february-2021/

Call for participation in training on KoBo toolbox

SANEM Impact Assessment Centre is set to organize an online training program on KoBo Toolbox, a mobile-based tool for data collection. The training will be delivered virtually on 24-25 February 2021 and 27-28 February 2021 from 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm each day. Mr. Joaned, Research Associate, SANEM, will conduct the training. Interested participants from all backgrounds are requested to email their CV and a cover letter by 12 February, 2021. The email should be sent to sanem.conference@gmail.com with the subject line "SANEM Online Training on KoBo Toolbox".

SANEM-EDI webinar held in Dhaka

SANEM in collaboration with Economic Development & Institutions (EDI) and Oxford Policy Management (OPM) conducted a webinar on "Institutional Dimensions of Tax Reforms in Bangladesh" on 14 January 2021. On behalf of the author, Dr. Sadiq Ahmed, Vice Chairman, PRI, Dr. Bazlul Haque Khondker, Chairman, SANEM, delivered the keynote presentation. The webinar was chaired by Professor Francois Bourguignon, Former Chief Economist, the World Bank, and Chair Emeritus, Paris School of Economics. Dr. Selim Raihan, Executive Director, SANEM; Dr. Umar Salam, Senior Economist, Office of the Chief Economist, OPM; Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur, Executive Director, PRI; Dr. Nasiruddin Ahmed, Former Chairman, NBR, Bangladesh; Mr. Abul Kasem Khan, Managing Director, A.K. Khan Telecom Limited; Ms. Ferdaus Ara Begum, Chief Executive Officer, BUILD, were the panellists.

UNESCAP, ARTNet, and SANEM webinar

A webinar titled "Asia-Pacific LDC Graduation, Trade and Pandemic" was jointly conducted by the UNESCAP, ARTNeT and SANEM on 27 January 2021. Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, Under-Secretary-General and the United Nations High Representative for the LDCs, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, delivered the opening remarks. Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow, CPD, and Member, Committee of the Development Policy, UN, delivered the keynote speech. Dr. Selim Raihan was a panelist along with Mr. Taufiqur Rahman, Head, LDC Unit, Development Division, WTO (on Trade impacts of COVID-19 and evolving discussion in WTO); H.E. Ms. Mere Falemaka, Ambassador, Permanent Delegation of the Pacific Island Forum to the WTO and the UN in Geneva; Dr. Paras Kharel, Research Director, SAWTEE; Ms. Christine Bowers, Head of Project, GIZ, Cambodia; and Ms. Su Thet Hninn, Assistant Director, Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar. Dr. Mia Mikic, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ARTNeT and Coordinator, UNESCAP moderated the session.

Dr. Sayema Haque Bidisha was a panelist at a book launching ceremony

Dr. Sayema Haque Bidisha, Research Director, SANEM attended the virtual launching ceremony of the Bengali translated version of Thomas Pickety's "Capital in the 21st Century" by Dr. Muhammad Masum, as a panel discussant. The webinar, which was organized by the Abdur Razzak Foundation on 20 January 2021, was presided over by Professor Anu Muhammad.

Events