

COVID-19 Response Project First Interim Report April 15, 2020

Pursuant to the setting up of the BMMK Covid-19 Response Project in mid-March 2020, the project team has been busy on several fronts:

1. Identifying and commissioning local seamstresses from Bilal Kenya EUP Tailoring schools and other village tailors to stitch double strength cotton, washable face masks for distribution.
2. Identifying mass producers of face masks and purchasing a large number for immediate distribution.
3. In this regard, local seamstresses in Mtongwe (Mombasa), Bahakanda, Burani, Miamba, Shimoni and Mwasafu have stitched and distributed over 2,000 masks to local boda boda motorcycle taxi drivers, bus drivers and conductors, youths and women selling at the local market places and the elderly.
4. The distribution is accompanied with basic safety information explaining the need to regularly wash the masks, maintain at least a 2 metre physical distance, wash hands regularly and stay at home as far as possible.
5. The Mission also purchased 10,000 face masks and shared them with CHEPS Kenya, an NGO (managed by Dr. Muhsin Sheriff) working in Kilifi and with Lamu youths (through Bilal Lamu) where the high cost has led to women cutting up their bras and making masks out of them. More will be purchased as need is determined.

Lamu women cover faces with bras as prices of masks soar

Face masks sold for between Sh100 and Sh200, even after state ordered not more than Sh20 for one covering one's mouth and nose a requirement when in public

ONE PRAGMATIST

Mombasa in some parts of Lamu have seen a rise in the price of face masks owing to the high price of masks on the market.

Despite the directive by the state to limit the price of masks, local manufacturers in the region have taken full advantage of the situation to exploit market of the public.

There is an attempt to keep up with the demand for masks to avoid the masks to public, women in Mombasa and Lamu are cutting up their bras and making masks out of them to cover their faces and their families.

Apart from the high cost of the masks, many people have expressed their concern about the availability of the masks in the number of producers is still low.

Those who speak to the state still have a long way to go to meet the demand for masks in the state given the current circumstances and other necessities.

My friend's mother, Hilda, who is a seamstress in Mombasa, says she has been busy for the last few weeks of her work but she has to work late hours to be able to keep up with the demand for masks.

High cost will not be a problem, if a few more were the same, especially in the state. As a woman, I am doing everything I can to keep my family safe and will do anything to achieve that," Hilda said.

Despite the state order for the government to limit the price of masks, taking advantage of the situation and have them sell for masks at an affordable cost.

"I have made several masks for myself and my children and other family members. People start when they see us using them but we have been forced to continue to make them to do anything to stay safe from this disease," Hilda's mother Nancy Chagwa told the Star.

Despite the state's directive, many have to continue to be covering their faces with bras, they state it is their only option of keeping safe at a time when most are trying to escape the globe.

"People look at it and think we are crazy but we are keeping safe from this disease. At least we are doing something to help ourselves since we are in this predicament," she said.

Locals have equally called on the government to limit the price of masks as a way of helping the people to afford them.

Advocate General of Nairobi in Mombasa said the response will



Women in Mombasa use bras to make masks as they go about their business in the market.

- The team also called up all the women groups supported by the Bilal Economic Upliftment (EUP) program to immediately embark on making of liquid soap and detergent for wide and free distribution within the community. This is undergoing at several Bilal Kenya centres and hygiene materials distributed.



Liquid Soap Making at Chengoni Centre

- Given the need for water for regular hygiene, Bilal Kenya reduce the cost of water by 50% at all its water desalination plants in Al Mujtaba Centre, Miamba, Al Mahdi Centre, Burani and Al Ridha Centre, Mtongwe.

- Regular handwashing is recommended as a key protective act; yet handwashing facilities do not exist in public. Bilal Kenya embarked on fabricating up to a 100 handwashing stations with 100 litre water tanks to be placed at strategic locations like mosques, churches, medical facilities, public bus stands, market places and police stations within the all the communities. The projects are arranged jointly with local stakeholders who take responsibility for refilling the tanks with water and liquid soap and ensuring security of the equipment. The first 10 have been launched within the Bilal Kenya's Al Hujjah Centre, Chengoni. Others are under construction will be released as they become ready for deployment.



- Motivated by the general fervor at dealing with the pandemic, women and school children in several centres began to improvise their own handwashing solutions from 20 litre plastic jerrycans and some sticks and string. The children carried it further by constructing them in every home in the village.



Explaining Handwashing technique to the elderly

10. As governmental restrictions increased towards better managing the crisis, many businesses closed down. Wholesale and retail markets also began to feel the effect of enforced physical distancing.

11. With closures of businesses, daily wage earners were the hardest hit. They immediately lost their sources of livelihood. Bilal Kenya responded to the more acute cases within its ambit of operations around its Centres. Around the Husainy Centre, Bahakanda, a group of 10 families of farm labourers lost their daily wage employment because their employers who otherwise worked in Mombasa had now lost their jobs due to business closures and had returned home to tend to their farms. The crisis was having a domino effect. Food parcels were supplied to the families to keep them from starving until the distribution of Ramadhan Iftar parcels in the next three weeks.



12. The situation around the Al Baqir, Mwasafu was more serious. A large part of the community, especially the youth, depend on sand harvesting from dry riverbeds as their main source of livelihood. They are organized in a loose cooperative and work together and support each other. They earn their living on daily wages earned from loading the lorries that come to buy sand. Government anti-COVID19 directives required them to cease sand harvesting. A whole community of 124 families was immediately affected. Some of the youth were from the Al Baqir Centre community; the majority were congregants at the nearby Churches.



Jobless sand miner in Mwasafu outside his home

13. Despite challenges over sending food aid from Mombasa due to closure of passage rights between Counties, Bilal Kenya and the local muballighs at the Al Baqir Centre managed to source sufficient food to supply the whole affected group of 124 families with food rations.
14. The local administration was involved in the process of food distribution and to ensure that proper hygiene provisions were adhered to. At the distribution at the Bilal Centre, a few people were allowed in at a time, required to wash their hands, wear face masks also donated by Bilal Kenya and then collect their allocation of the monthly ration. This was the first time that an interfaith function had been hosted by a Muslim community and food distributed to other than their own congregants. There was great surprise and deep appreciation expressed at Bilal's recognition of their plight. The humanitarian basis of the aid was explained. It is hope that this will be an opportunity to build on as we move towards deeper interfaith engagements, distribution of food during Ramadhan and other months of the year as we celebrate and commemorate the anniversaries of the Holy Prophet and his Ahlul Bait a.s. will be done on a humanitarian basis. We hope that our donors and well-wishers will continue to support such efforts that are embedded in humanitarian values which are of the essence of Islamic values.



Distributing Face Masks



Food Distribution Mwasafu

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