

Brac receives 56 million cloth masks from US

The masks will be distributed among the most vulnerable communities across country, says Brac

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Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh receiving the consignment in an event in Dhaka on Thursday, January 6, 2021 **Courtesy**

By Tribune Desk

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With Bangladesh bracing for a probable new wave of Covid-19, exacerbated by the Omicron variant, Brac has received a bulk of 56 million three layered reusable cotton masks from Hanesbrands Inc, a US multinational corporation.

The masks will be distributed among the most vulnerable people in all the 64 districts through community clinics.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller formally handed over the masks to Asif Saleh, executive director of Brac, at a ceremony at the Brac Centre in the capital on Thursday.

Lokman Hossain Miah, senior secretary to the Health Services Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, attended the event as the chief guest with KM Tariqul Islam, director general, NGO Affairs Bureau, and US Ambassador Earl R Miller being present as special guests.

US-based funding organization the Open Society Foundation (OSF) and Yale University jointly coordinated the initiative to deliver the masks to Brac.

Senior Secretary Lokman Hossain Miah congratulated Brac, Hanesbrands and other entities involved in the initiative.

He said: “There are two major ways to tackle transmission of Covid-19 at present. One is to ensure the wearing of masks by people including rickshaw-pullers, street vendors and day labourers who are constantly on the move for their livelihoods, and the other is vaccination. So, it’s imperative that we make facemasks easily available to these people.”

US ambassador Earl R Miller said: “Brac, the Government of Bangladesh, the American private sector and the US Embassy are working together to provide over 56 million masks to the Bangladeshi people donated by Hanesbrand. By heeding the lessons of science and history and through collaborative efforts like these, together, as a global community, we will defeat this pandemic.”

NGO Affairs Bureau director general KM Tariqul Islam said: “This bulk of masks will greatly help our vulnerable communities continue their fight against the pandemic. Brac will distribute these masks across the country through the government’s community clinics network.”

Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh said: “Making masks available and accessible for all is crucial in the fight against Covid-19. We have seen significant success in mass vaccination in high-risk areas in Bangladesh, but additional preventive measures such as wearing masks are still vital.

“This donation will allow us to scale up our preventative efforts, and ensure that we can get free masks to the people who need them the most. We are extremely grateful to have support from multiple partners, which in addition to providing resources, provides us with encouragement that we are not in this fight alone,” he said.