

press release

Standard Chartered and OBHIZATRIK Foundation to distribute fresh supplies to 2 lac distressed individuals sourced from 200 smallholder farms



Standard Chartered Bangladesh has partnered with OBHIZATRIK Foundation to distribute fresh food packages consisting of organic fruits and vegetables to serve the immediate needs of distressed communities in Dhaka and Chittagong. Under the initiative, the food packages will reach 40,000 families, supporting 200,000 direct beneficiaries. The produce will be sourced directly from 200 rural smallholder farms, sustaining employment for around 2000 workers.

Depressed economic activity as a result of the pandemic continues to put distressed communities in a twin jeopardy, where they must face the threat of a pandemic while their

livelihoods remain uncertain. Informal and casually employed workers are particularly vulnerable. Through this partnership, the Bank hopes to build a sustainable linkage between vulnerable individuals with diminished purchasing power and smallholder farmers facing a dearth of demand for their produce.

The food packages will include a range of fresh vegetables and fruits, including sweet pumpkin, bitter gourd, gourd, green chili, potato, spinach, eggplant, cucumber and seasonal fruits. Each package will consist of 5 KG of fresh organic produce. The produce will be distributed through OBHIZATRIK Foundation's "Bina Poyshar Bazar" platform, at locations across Dhaka and Chattogram.

Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO, Standard Chartered Bangladesh, said, "Few months back, a video went viral on social media which showed a farmer in tears, as he had to throw away vegetables he had been unable to sell even at 5% of the price that it was sold for in Dhaka. Around the same time, we at Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh reached out to our millennial colleagues in Bangladesh to come up with innovative community engagement plans. They came up with the idea to bridge between those farmers and the city dwellers, both of whom were adversely impacted by the pandemic. The combination of these two separate events, led us to partner with OBHIZATRIK Foundation, which was already doing some wonderful work to support the distressed communities who were impacted as a result of the supply and demand disruption due to COVID 19."

He added, "The government has played an exemplary leadership role in keeping the wheels of the economy turning through a substantial stimulus programme equivalent to around 4% of our national GDP, supportive fiscal policy and accommodative monetary policy. Distressed individuals have also been supported through a number of relief measures. But what we are facing is a generational challenge, and history has shown that we can prevent the risk of a vicious downward cycle only through coordinated and decisive actions in concert between all stakeholders, across the private and public sectors."

Ahmed Imtiaz Jami, President of OBHIZATRIK Foundation said, "We are working for the last 10 years in 32 districts of Bangladesh. At the onset of the pandemic, we started working with various initiatives: we set up 60 hand washing basins, distributed 50,000 units of hand sanitiser, PPE and masks to the doctors, we have provided 2 lac cooked meal during this period and 5 lac grocery bags for the low income communities."

He also said, "Bina Poyshar Bazar initiative is another project addressing the COVID-19 crisis. We started this project before in Dhaka, Rangpur and Chattogram for around 50,000 people, but this time we are doing it with Standard Chartered at a very large scale. We are glad to organise this in six different locations and support 2 lac low income individuals. I would like to thank Standard Chartered for supporting this cause."

Standard Chartered is currently focusing its community support measures in four key areas:

- **Providing life-sustaining food and hygiene support** to 120,000 individuals, including 3,600,000 meals and personal hygiene material through Bidyanondo Foundation, BRAC and Kumudini Welfare Trust.
- **Supporting life-saving medical services** for 460 critically-affected COVID-19 patients through Sajida Foundation and Bidyanondo Foundation.
- **Supporting education** by contributing USD 1.3 million to UNICEF to be used for protection measures and remote education of vulnerable children.
- **Supporting the healthcare workers fighting on the frontlines** by contributing USD 300,000 to Red Cross programmes.

The Bank had announced a broad range of support measures for its retail customers and businesses, including loan repayment holidays, fee waivers or cancellations and loan extension facilities, in addition to the government-led support measures. It has initiated a US\$1 billion global financing program for companies that provide goods and services to help the fight against COVID-19. It has also launched a US\$50 million fund aiding communities affected by the pandemic across its global footprint, including Bangladesh.

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Standard Chartered

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