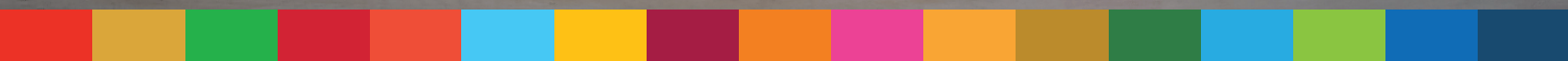




UNITED NATIONS
BANGLADESH



UN COUNTRY TEAM RESULT REPORT BANGLADESH 2020



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Md. Asifur Rahman
First Winner, UN75 Digital Art Contest organized by UN in Bangladesh

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FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic that gripped the world in 2020 forced everyone, including the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Bangladesh, to adapt, adjust and innovate. The pandemic has put lives on hold for many young people disrupting studies and delaying entry into the labor market. Life as we knew it has been overturned for so many. With the pandemic impacting on economies and livelihoods, poverty and inequalities are deepening putting social protection measures designed to help people in moments of crisis, under extreme pressure.

In the face of these challenges, the Government of Bangladesh responded to the health emergency, rolled out large stimulus packages, presented its second Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals, initiated its 8th Five Year Plan, and continued on its path to graduating out of LDC status.

This report summarizes the results that the UN in Bangladesh achieved in partnership with Government, national and international NGOs and civil society, member state including donor partners and international financial institutions. The report refers to four frameworks within which this support was provided to the Government. The health response to the COVID-19 pandemic was coordinated within the Bangladesh Preparedness and Response Plan. The Immediate Socioeconomic Response Plan for COVID-19 in Bangladesh was anchored in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2017-2020), which was, in agreement with the Government, extended by a year to December 2021. The Flood and Cyclone Response Plan and the annual Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis provided the coordinating framework for the UN's humanitarian work during the year.

2020 was a year that truly demonstrated that we are stronger when we work together towards shared goals. We are thankful to our partners for the support and collaboration extended to the UN in Bangladesh. As this report is being written, Bangladesh and the world continues to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. While hope is on the horizon thanks to vaccines and other public health measures, the pandemic's socio-economic impact will be felt for some time to come. Looking ahead, we are guided by the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030. This is our roadmap to a greener, cleaner and more inclusive post-pandemic world.

Mia Seppo

United Nations Resident Coordinator
Bangladesh

UN COUNTRY TEAM

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Bangladesh consists of 16 resident agencies and works alongside another 5 non-resident agencies. UNDRR, UNDESA, UNCTAD and UNESCAP also support the Government of Bangladesh and the UNCT on a broad range of programmatic and policy areas. In addition, UNIC is integrated with the Resident Coordinator's Office to provide support on communication.

United Nations Agencies in Bangladesh

Resident Agencies

16



Non-resident Agencies

5



KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS OF UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY

The work of the United Nations in Bangladesh is supported by and benefits from a close partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, as well as bilateral donors, international financial institutions (IFIs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations and other stakeholders. In 2020 those partners included more than 50 bilateral member state and non-state donors, 4 IFIs and several multilateral organizations.

Among the key donors in 2020 were: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA) and Vietnam. Contributions were also received from multilateral organizations, private donors, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), SDG Joint Programme and the World Bank. In 2020, the United Nations agencies in Bangladesh worked with more than 320 NGOs.



OVERVIEW

UNDAF PRIORITY AREAS

Both response and recovery interventions for COVID-19 aimed to support groups most affected by the structural drivers of multidimensional inequality that magnified the pandemic's impact.



In 2020, United Nations Country Team devoted the majority of its programmatic and human resources to the COVID-19 health and socio-economic response anchored within the UNDAF.

The UNCT system and development partners worked with the Government of Bangladesh to improve the targeting of the social protection system in response to the crisis, emphasizing support for people who lost their employment and livelihoods, especially in Bangladesh's large informal sector. Both response and recovery interventions aimed to support groups most affected by the structural drivers of multidimensional inequality that magnified the pandemic's impact. Throughout the year, UNCT was vigilant about how and who to target in projects and with whom they would consult.



The United Nations Immediate Socio-Economic Response Plan (ISERP)

- Pillar 1:** Protecting Health Services and Systems During the Crisis
- Pillar 2:** Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services
- Pillar 3:** Protecting Jobs, MSMEs, and the Most Vulnerable Productive Sectors
- Pillar 4:** Macroeconomic support
- Pillar 5:** Social Cohesion and Community Resilience

CHAPTER 1

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

In 2020, the Government of Bangladesh approved its 8th Five-Year Plan (8FYP), which prioritizes poverty reduction, reduction in inequalities, and social expenditure, among other issues.



At the beginning of 2020, Bangladesh was making concrete if uneven progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The country had accelerated human development, made remarkable achievements on the Millennium Development Goals, and had a decade of very high growth rates. Bangladesh had cleared the first Triennial Review for graduating out of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) status and was preparing to graduate from the group of LDCs in 2024, with the expectation that it would meet the required criteria for LDC graduation at the United Nations triennial review in February 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on Bangladesh throughout the year, exacerbating pre-existing social, economic, environmental and political fragilities while also creating new challenges. The pandemic placed increased stress on Bangladesh's already-fragile public health infrastructure, testing national capacities to respond to a multifaceted health crisis. In response, the Government ramped up efforts to curb the spread of the virus by expanding healthcare services, instituting public health measures and movement restrictions, with the support of the United Nations system and other development partners, to deliver an effective and coordinated health response.

Throughout the country, districts that were already behind national socio-economic averages before the outbreak of COVID-19 faced heightened risk of further marginalization as the socio-economic response struggled to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Along with the challenges resulting from the pandemic, the country's high vulnerability to the impacts of climate-related disasters continued to test national resilience mechanisms. In mid-2020, Cyclone Amphan hit Bangladesh's coastal areas, causing large-scale damage to the eastern part of the Sundarbans and districts within the coastal belt. In June, heavy flooding affected Bangladesh's northern districts of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Rangpur, which were already reeling under the impact of layoffs in the ready-made garment factories and returning migrant workers from abroad.



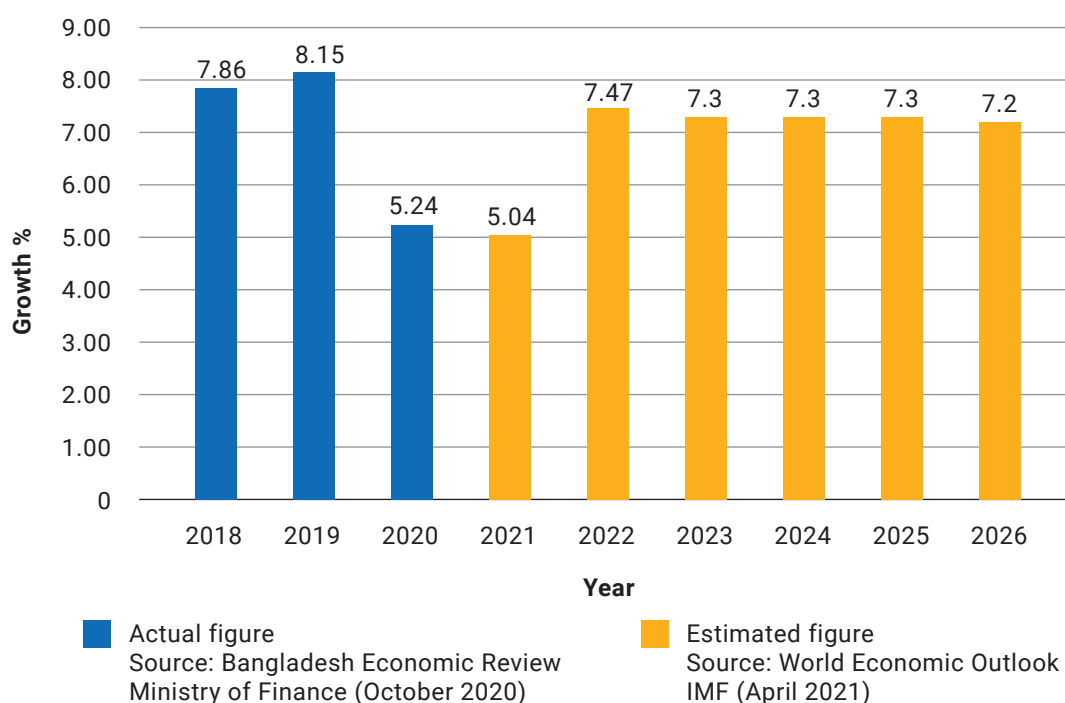
Photo: FAO Bangladesh

While managing the dual impact of the pandemic and the climate related hazards in 2020, Bangladesh submitted the second Voluntary National Review (VNR) of its SDG achievements. The country also continued the process that led to the UN Committee on Development Policy recommending it for graduation out of the LDC category in February 2021. Further, in 2020, the Government of Bangladesh approved its 8th Five-Year Plan (8FYP), which prioritizes poverty reduction, reduction in inequalities and social expenditure, among other issues. The Government also identified a spectrum of prevailing gender-specific rights issues and development challenges that need to be addressed, including sexual harassment, violence, child marriage, reproductive health, women's lack of economic empowerment and access to resources and barriers to access to justice for women and girls. The Government recognized the need to harness the demographic dividend as an avenue to accelerate economic growth.

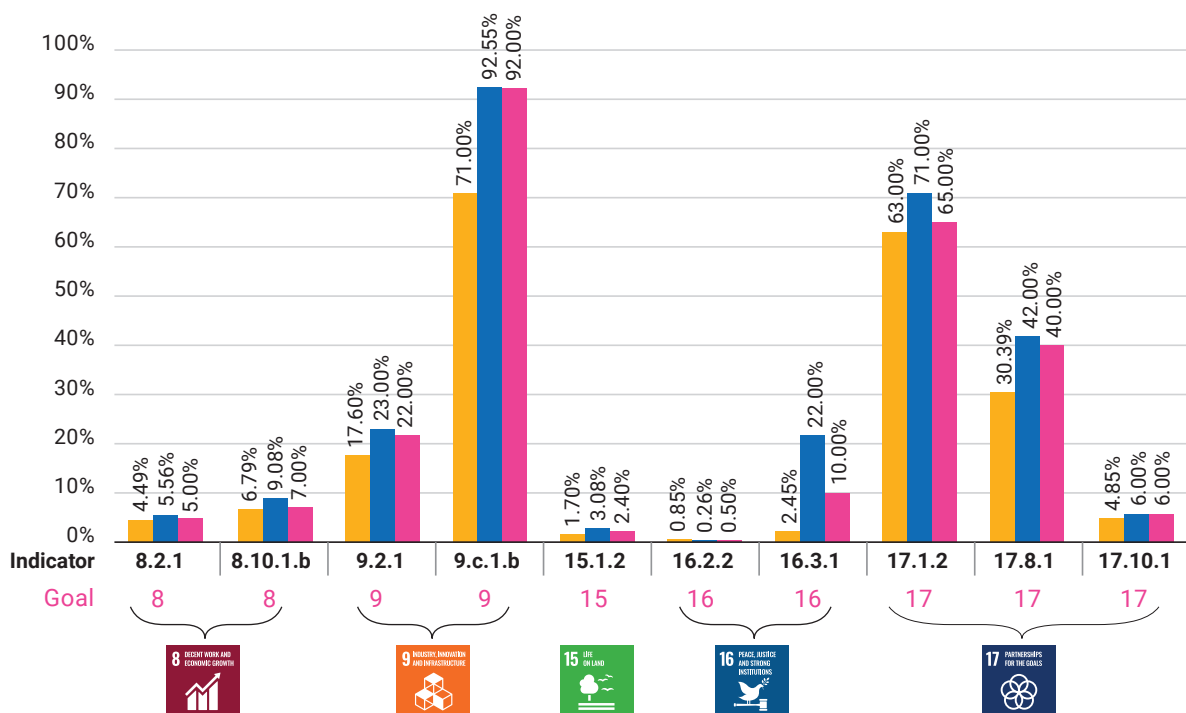
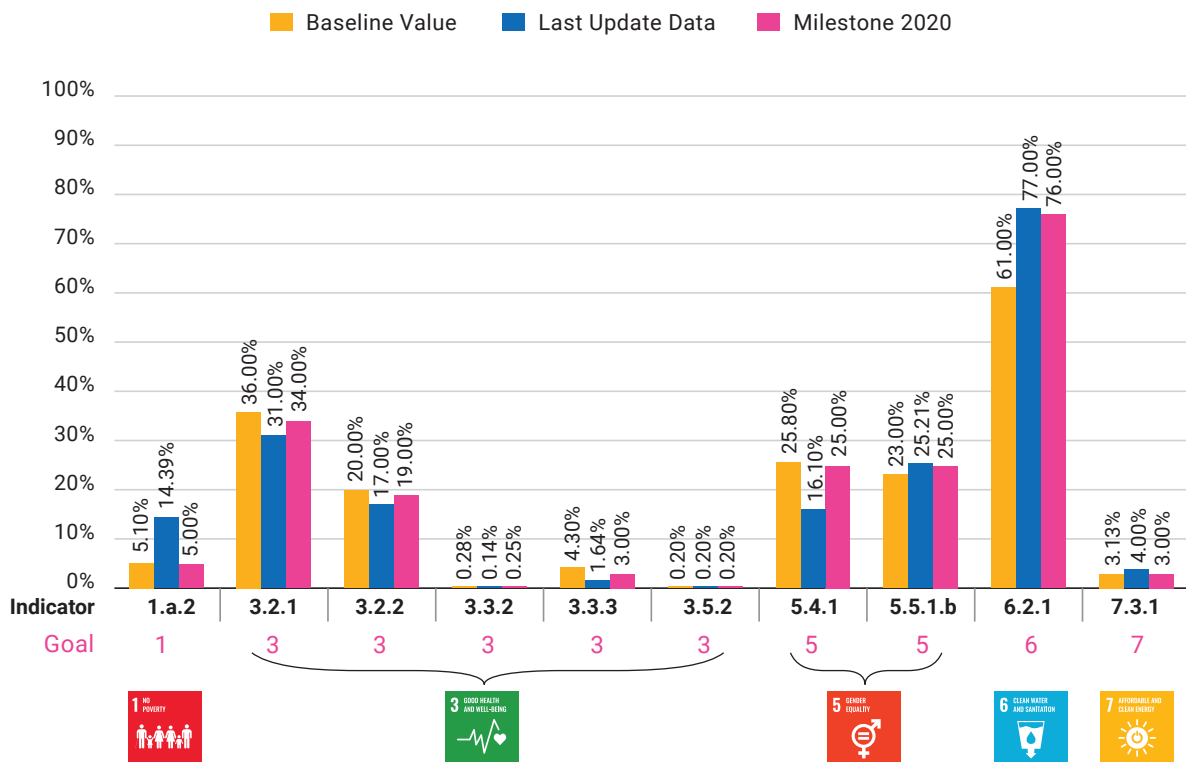
As 2020 came to a close, Bangladesh faced a number of challenges, but also great potential to reboot its growth strategy into a greener and more inclusive development pathway by leveraging its young work force.

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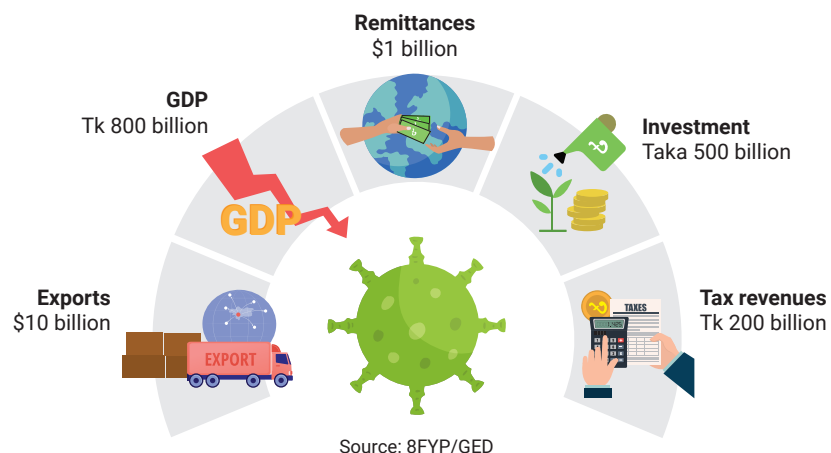
GDP GROWTH RATE OF BANGLADESH



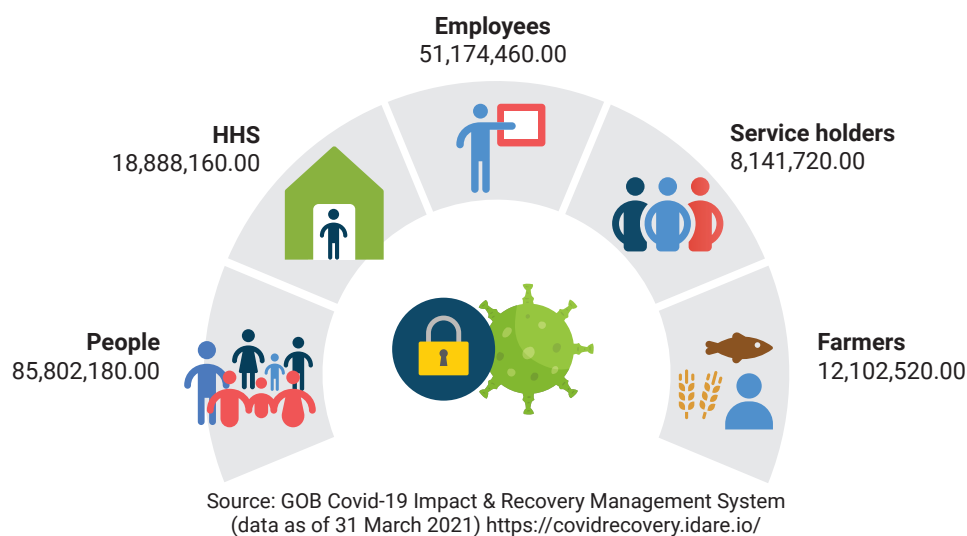
SDG PROGRESS 2020



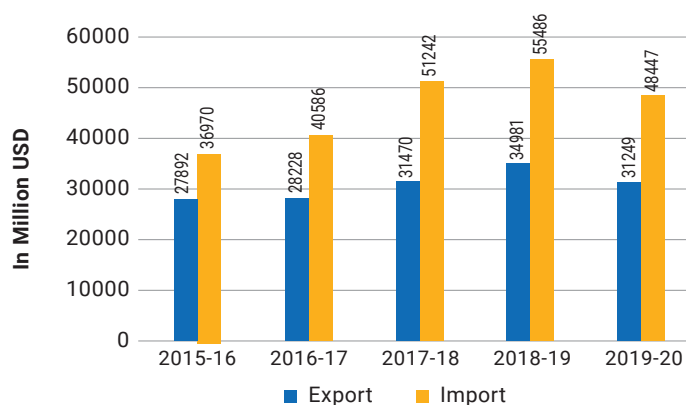
COVID 19 EFFECTS ARE SEVERE WITH SUBSTANTIAL LOSSES IN



NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY COVID -19



IMPORT AND EXPORT 2015-2020



CHAPTER 2

UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE UNDAF

In 2020, the UNCT Bangladesh shifted into a development-in-emergency mode to address the short- to medium-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people of Bangladesh.



In 2020, the UNCT Bangladesh shifted into a development-in-emergency mode to address the short- to medium-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the people of Bangladesh. A health response plan – the Bangladesh Preparedness and Response Plan (BPRP) and an Immediate Socioeconomic Response Plan (ISERP) – was prepared together with the Government, in line with corporate guidance.

An Immediate Socioeconomic Response Plan (ISERP) was also formulated to mitigate the devastating impact of the pandemic on some of the most vulnerable groups in Bangladesh. The ISERP, which contains elements of both response and recovery, was integrated into the UNDAF, which provided the legal basis for UN programming. Systemic work in support of the 2030 Agenda was woven together with COVID-19 support throughout the year.

Details on the health and socio-economic responses to the pandemic through the BPRP and ISERP follow below.

2.1 UN HEALTH RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, a UN Interagency Support Team (IST) was organized in March 2020 under the joint leadership of the WHO Representative and UN Resident Coordinator to support UN agencies and the Government to rapidly develop and implement a Bangladesh Preparedness and Response Plan (BPRP), as guided by WHO global guidelines (Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan Operational Planning Guidelines to Support Country Preparedness and Response).

In close coordination with the Government, the UN developed the BPRP, which was designed to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 in Bangladesh and reduce its impact. Approved by the Government of Bangladesh in July 2020, the BPRP interventions included strengthening surveillance capacity nationwide; slowing community transmission and preventing amplification events; preventing transmission and



Photo: WHO Bangladesh



Photo: FAO Bangladesh

enhancing infection prevention and control in healthcare settings; identifying and treating cases effectively; ensuring continuity of essential health services; and communicating risks and best practices to communities. Over the course of the year, more than USD122 million was mobilized by the Government, UN agencies, and implementing partners for BPRP activities.

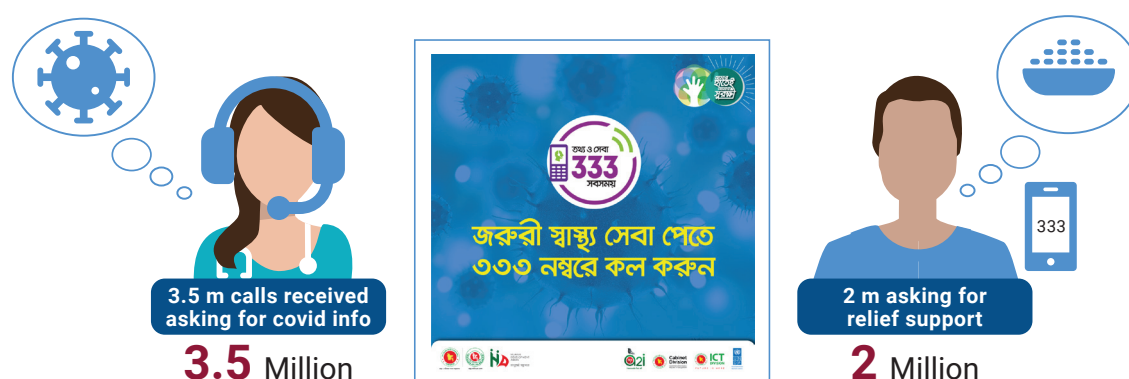
An interagency BPRP pillar coordination system was established with contributing UN agencies and bilateral partners providing pillar coordinators to support designated Government pillar leads. Respective BPRP pillars coordinated all the stakeholders for coherent, synergistic, efficient interventions. Multiple sub-national multisectoral committees at various district and sub-district levels were set up to lead and coordinate field response. As a result of this ongoing technical coordination, the UN health response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh leveraged capacities across agencies and coordinated contributions made on the ground by FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP and WHO. At the technical level, the BPBP pillars also served as a practical mechanism to improve coordination among government, development, and implementing partners, and to foster novel collaborative interagency initiatives such as the multistakeholder Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) response, the Community Support Team (CST) intervention, the interagency IPC strengthening group, and the One Health laboratory biosafety strengthening initiatives. To keep partners informed about the various aspects of the COVID-19 response, the IST, together with the Resident Coordinator's Office, issued 15 multisectoral sitreps which were shared with a broad range of stakeholders.

Since June 2020, CSTs visited 1,825,424 households across Dhaka, screening 207,663 suspected COVID-19 cases.

The UN IST supported development of a CST intervention to build the capacity of communities

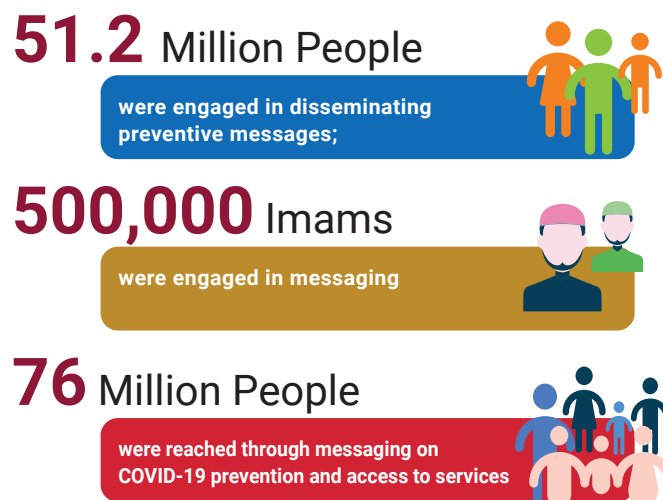
to prepare and respond to emerging public health threats and priorities during the pandemic. In 2020, 570 CST-trained local community health workers and volunteers worked across 54 wards of Dhaka North. (Work was expanded to all 75 wards of Dhaka South in January 2021.) Since June 2020, CSTs visited 1,825,424 households across Dhaka, screening 207,663 suspected COVID-19 cases, and established follow-up with pregnant mothers, of which 54,508 were identified as having signs and symptoms consistent with the disease.

CST household screening and vulnerability assessments were supported by a dedicated CST smartphone application and information system developed by FAO and icddr,b, linking data with laboratory support and the core DGHS information management system. A CST-dedicated



telemedicine system set up by a2i (UNDP) in coordination with DGHS, with technical support from FAO and UNFPA, provides toll-free numbers and a hotline to support suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases. With a2i's support, the National Call Center 333 was repurposed to provide COVID-19 information. More than 3.5 million calls were received asking for COVID-19-related information and more than 2 million calls were received asking for emergency relief support. The latter were forwarded to concerned authorities.

The RCCE Pillar of the national COVID-19 response coordinated by UNICEF and DGHS brought together more than 400 representatives from government, the private sector, 13 UN agencies, bilateral donors and civil society organizations to design, implement and monitor a collective plan of action for COVID-19 response. Through the RCCE Pillar, 51.2 million people were engaged in disseminating preventive messages; 500,000 Imams were engaged in messaging through 238,000 mosques; and 76 million people were reached through messaging on COVID-19 prevention and access to services. More than 42 evidence generation activities,



including U-Report mobile-based polling, online and observation surveys were conducted to ensure evidence-informed communication. Social media posts countering misinformation recorded 73.6 million views. Approximately 400 NGOs, 8 NGO networks and government counterparts were actively involved with the RCCE pillar activities.

2.2 SOCIOECONOMIC RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Photo: ILO Bangladesh

The UN complemented the Government of Bangladesh's fiscal stimulus measures and support of other development partners with a strategic multisectoral response to the multidimensional impact of the pandemic. Key contributions made and results achieved by the UN system collectively in 2020 are summarized below. Box 1 presents the key ongoing joint programmes of the UN during the year.

BOX 1

JOINT PROGRAMMES OF THE UN IN BANGLADESH



Enhancing Social Protection for Female Tea Garden Workers and their Families in Sylhet Division



Photo: ILO Bangladesh

Funded by the SDG Fund, this is a proof of concept project of ILO, UNICEF UNFPA and UN Women with the Government, with a budget of USD 2 million. The direct beneficiaries are 360,000 tea garden workers, mainly women, children and persons with disabilities. The policy advocacy results are expected to benefit 500,000 tea garden workers in Bangladesh. In the project's first year an extensive review was conducted of existing legislation and policies in Bangladesh National Social Security Strategy 2015, Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 (Amended 2013 & 2018) and other relevant

policies and laws on education, health and national women's advancement policy. The review study report identified the inequalities and systematic drivers of exclusion toward tea garden workers and their families in accessing institutional services and social protection benefits in line with life-cycle framework. A framework/strategy for coordination of existing data on tea garden workers was prepared. The framework/strategy will allow the Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA) and the Government to generate gender disaggregated data and monitor the situation of the tea garden workers, particularly their health, education and working environment. Female tea garden workers benefited from enhanced bargaining and negotiation skills, and awareness of their rights to development, health, education, information and decent work. They also took part in the biennium collective agreement consultation processes. The biennium collective agreement 2019-2020 between Bangladesh Cha Shramik Union (BCSU) and BTA ensured basic benefits and increase of daily wages for tea garden workers.

Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

A joint project of ILO, UNCDF, UNDP and UN Women with the Government, this project addresses the challenges of meeting the vast funding gap for achieving the SDGs in Bangladesh, especially in the context of its graduation out of LDC status. Further, it seeks to incorporate the additional funding requirements in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funded by the SDG Fund and with a budget of USD 1.1 million, this project will seek to put in place a governance and oversight mechanism for SDG financing in Bangladesh; prepare an updated development finance

assessment and financing strategy for SDGs; prepare SDG specific financing roadmaps and generate a pipeline of bankable investment projects for SDGs 6, 7 and 13; and establish multi-stakeholder platforms for creation and monitoring of SDG financing strategies.

National Resilience Programme



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

This USD 12 million project is a partnership between the Government of Bangladesh, UNDP, UNOPS and UN Women. Funded by the Government, FCDO and SIDA, the project is the most comprehensive resilience building project in Bangladesh. Results in 2020 included: developing an ex-ante Disaster Impact Assessment tool and framework; integrating disaster resilience indicators into the results framework of the 8th Five Year Plan; developing a disaster and climate change risk profile of the industrial sector for promoting risk-informed private investment; demonstrating community

level resilience models on flood warning systems; inclusion of gender and disability in DRR activities; integration of DRR in Social Safety Net programmes; and promoting gender responsive humanitarian response for COVID 19, Cyclone Amphan and the 2020 monsoon flood.

Cooking Fuel Needs, Environmental Degradation and Food Security for Populations Effected by the Refugee Crisis (SAFEPlus)



Photo: IOM Bangladesh

A three-year (June 2018-May 2021) joint programme of IOM, FAO and WFP, SAFEPlus seeks to contribute to the overall food and nutrition security, empowerment, and resilience of 125,000 Rohingya and host community households in Cox's Bazar. The programme objectives address short-, medium- and longer-term challenges with activities benefitting both the Rohingya and host community populations, thereby contributing to social cohesion. By providing alternative cooking fuel, the interventions have reversed the trend of deforestation in the affected area and

addressed protection concerns associated with collecting firewood. Reforestation efforts are ongoing to make the camps greener while also contributing to the local economy through engaging people in planting activities. This has resulted in a cleaner environment in the camps and surrounding area. In 2020, to reduce firewood consumption in 17 targeted camps, 1,001,944 LPG refills were delivered to the host and Rohingya communities, and off-farm livelihoods activities benefited 11,837 households, through asset creation, grants, inputs support, training, and market linkage. The on-farm activities also provided support to 1,440 Farmer Field School beneficiaries through the provision of improved seeds, training, agro-machinery/market linkage and farming techniques. Rohingya mentoring support benefited 2,584 people, building their capacity on innovative homestead gardening and skills. One hundred percent of the planting target of 2,000 hectares planted was achieved to restore degraded forestland outside the camps and 52 per cent of the target was achieved inside the camps. More than 2,348,725 seedlings were produced for use in land restoration and stabilization activities, and 17 nurseries (including two permanent nurseries) were established in 2020. IOM and WFP reprogrammed their livelihoods activities to respond to the Covid-19 emergency, provisioning unconditional cash grants for 11,837 households. FAO provided Aman rice seeds to 23,977 marginal and small-scale farmers, 83 per cent of whom have planted the seeds. Eight local Aggregation Centers were established in 2020 in Ukhia and Teknaf sub-districts and dry season planting strategies were piloted for the restoration of forestland inside the camps.

Joint Programme on Child Marriage



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

As part of the joint programme to end child marriage, since 2018 UNICEF and UNFPA have supported the launch of a National Action Plan to End Child Marriage. In 2020, as part of that effort, the national award-winning trans-media 'Raise the beat/Dhol' campaign on ending child marriage reached approximately 50 million people and engaged more than 25 million people through social media.

UNFPA subsequently organized a dialogue on violence against women and child marriage with Parliamentarians. UNICEF launched a report with the government, 'Ending Child Marriage: A profile of progress in Bangladesh,' which informed the revised national target for ending child marriage in Bangladesh's 8FYP. UNICEF also supported studies on child-sensitive social protection programmes and produced a policy paper on 'Universal Health Coverage and Financing Options,' which was used in formulating the 8FYP.

The Smallholder Agriculture Competitiveness Project (SACP)



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

The Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project (SACP) 2018-2024 aims to significantly increase incomes and food and nutrition security by helping smallholder farmers be more responsive and competitive in producing diverse, high-value crops and marketing fresh and processed agricultural products. The project will provide technical training and access to finance.

The USD110 million project, co-financed by the Government and private sector, will reach 250,000 rural households in southern Bangladesh, where the highest percentage of rural poor reside. Women, youth and disadvantaged households will be specifically targeted.

Under this project 54,090 farmers received support in areas including technology adaptation, climate smart and disaster resilient practices, and commercialization of high value produce. SACP led food processing entrepreneur training for 45,100 smallholder farmers. A total of 300 sub-assistant agricultural officers were trained on participatory rural appraisal for smallholder group mobilization and 30 staff from the Department of Agriculture Marketing were trained on buyer mapping. The project supported value chain studies and conducted market research on high value crops.

UNODC-UNHCR Joint Project on Building Knowledge, Capacities and Resilience to Counter the Threats of Drugs and Crime in Cox's Bazar (CXB)



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

This joint initiative of UNHCR and UNODC, in partnership with Government of Bangladesh, has the overall strategic objective to assist and strengthen the Government's efforts to respond effectively to the challenges posed by drugs and crime in Cox's Bazar. This response is delivered through strategic pillars under UNODC mandates: research and analytical work to generate evidence on the drugs and crime situation and expand the evidence base for policy and operational decisions; and family skills-based programmes to strengthen

capacities of families and caregivers to prevent negative social outcomes.

Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants - Bangladesh (GLO.ACT - Bangladesh) project



Photo: UNRCO Bangladesh

UNODC and IOM are implementing this project, which is funded by the European Union. Through targeted, innovative and demand-driven interventions, the project aims to support the Government of Bangladesh and civil society organizations to more effectively fight the crimes of human trafficking and migrant smuggling across the country. Efforts include developing evidence-based information on trafficking and smuggling patterns and trends; legislative review and harmonization; capability development of criminal justice

actors; and international cooperation. The project also provides direct assistance to victims of human trafficking and migrants in vulnerable situations through the strengthening of identification, referral, and protection mechanisms.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

The COVID-19 pandemic magnified both the strengths and challenges of Bangladesh's social protection system. While the Government provided large stimulus packages including cash transfer payments, its plan to scale-up further and quickly was constrained by the non-digitized system. In this situation, the UN supported the Government in distributing cash transfers (USD91million) through the 'ekPay' digital payment system and food aid to roughly 12.5 million people. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh announced a USD8 billion stimulus package, widening the social safety net coverage and increasing liquidity. This represented 3.7 per cent of GDP for different sectors, frontline service providers and beneficiaries.

The UN system continued to support the Government in reforming and strengthening social protection. A key item of support was revising the Mid-Term Review of National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report provided input to the 8FYP. Further studies commissioned by the UN also informed the 8FYP in the areas of child-sensitive social protection programmes, development of a Bangladesh/child-sensitive multidimensional poverty index and urban governance for women and children. To support delivery of the stimulus package for the SMEs, the UN supported the Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship (ICE) Center of the University of Dhaka on an initiative in partnership with Bangladesh Bank, Ministry of Finance and FBCCI, which assisted informal sector SMEs and local chambers in accessing the Government's support package.

BASIC SERVICES

Education

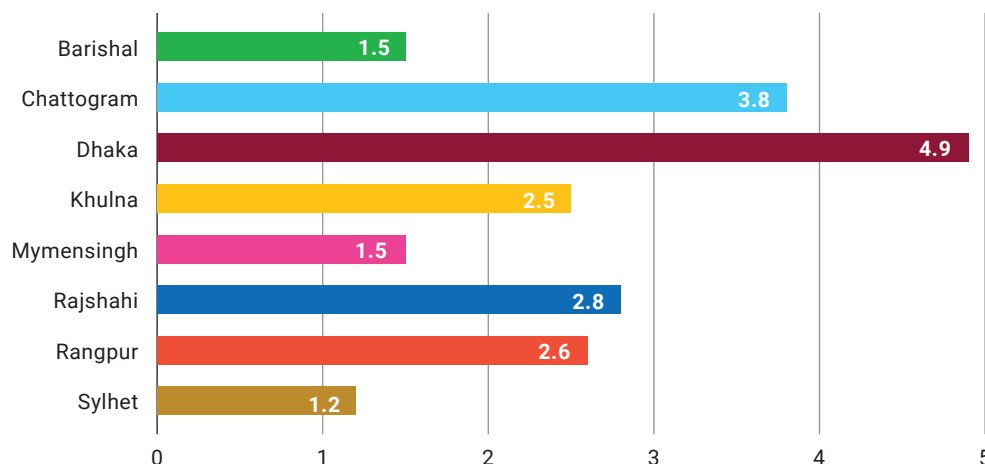
When schools were closed in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic, the UN system supported the Government in operationalizing remote learning for children. UNICEF and UNESCO worked with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education on a national education plan for the COVID-19 response that was also the basis for securing Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funding. As a result of UN-supported efforts, an estimated 17.46 million children aged 3–17 years were reached with remote learning and televised lessons. Among them, 8.7 million pre-primary/primary children were reached through televised lessons. An additional 8,765 students were able to take online classes from universities

and training institutes. Using a2i's open e-learning platform Muktopaath, more than 200,000 individuals across the country enrolled in some 135 online courses.



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

DIVISION WISE AFFECTED SCHOOL STUDENTS (IN MILLION)



Source: GOB Covid-19 Impact & Recovery Management System (31 March 2021)
<https://covidrecovery.idare.io/>

UN agencies also provided support for longer-term efforts that will benefit the education system when schools are able to re-open. This included technical and material support to the Government in preparing and endorsing a unified national curriculum framework, and reform of a primary education data management system supported by UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank.

Essential Health Services



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a drastic reduction in utilization of the major essential health services across all levels of health systems. Among the most affected areas were essential maternal and newborn health services and the supply chain of essential medicines for non-communicable diseases (NCD) such as hypertension, diabetes, other chronic diseases, and cancer, as well as mental health issues.

Amid the pandemic, UN agencies, including WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNDP, supported the Government in continuing to provide essential healthcare services. This included support for pregnant and lactating mothers and newborn babies; enhanced health safety measures in 2,000 cyclone shelters; health needs assessments of departing and returning migrants and their family members; support for the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and young people; and support for integration of prevention of mother-to-child transmission services for triple elimination (HIV, syphilis, hepatitis).

Progress was also achieved on relevant policy and legal frameworks in 2020. An Action Plan for National Maternal Health Strategy for 2019-2030 was developed and its implementation started. The National Midwifery Action Plan (2021-2025) was developed and endorsed by the Directorate General of Nursing and Midwifery (DGNM). Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for midwifery services was also revised and translated into Bengali. Based on the epidemiological analysis, the existing national strategy plans for TB and Malaria were updated for 2021-2025.

The Measles and Rubella (MR) campaign, which started on 12 December 2020, achieved the target of vaccinating 100 per cent of children nationwide. As a result of this six-week campaign, more than 36 million children aged nine months to nine years were vaccinated against MR, bringing Bangladesh closer to achieving the country's goal of measles-rubella elimination.



Photo: WHO Bangladesh

Midwifery education was conducted online, with both students and faculty learning how to deliver and receive education in this new modality. A PSC examination was held on 28 December 2020 to deploy 1,714 midwife graduates to government health facilities.

UNFPA produced a policy brief for advocacy with parliamentarians and policymakers on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternal and child health and reproductive health services in Bangladesh. This document was discussed in a policy dialogue at the Planning Commission and was used to make specific recommendations to the GED for inclusion in the 8th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

UNAIDS, working jointly with UNICEF, WHO and UNODC, supported the Government in ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Global Fund HIV grant 2021-2023. This would enable the Government and a civil society partner to apply for funds to increase HIV prevention and treatment coverage. WHO supported the Government in complying with the requirements for applying for and receive funding for the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis and malaria. As a result, Bangladesh received USD23 million for a period of three years for HIV prevention, some USD24 million for malaria and USD111 million for tuberculosis. Support was provided in writing the proposal; generating evidence on cost-efficiency; civil society consultations; and updating the national strategic plan for HIV. UNAIDS also supported implementation of healthcare interventions by UNICEF, UNFPA and UNODC among 1,500 most at-risk adolescents, 4,000 brothel-based sex workers, 50 prison health staff and 60 police.

Food and Nutrition Security

To mitigate the systemic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food systems and food supply chains and access to safe, healthy nutritious food for vulnerable segments of the population, FAO, IFAD and WFP, together with the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR), conducted two phases of assessments of food and nutrition security and impacts on farmers and urban poor. Throughout the year, those organizations continued to monitor the food security situation, identify the most vulnerable populations, and provide recommendations to address food and nutrition security.

WFP, FAO, UNICEF and IFAD provided coordinated support to the Government of Bangladesh in the face of increased food and nutrition security needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while UNDP assisted in delivering food assistance to targeted households. WFP and FAO worked together to enhance fresh food supply from smallholder farmers and linked them to urban beneficiaries. With technical support from FAO, IFAD provided a grant of USD915,000 through MOA to support 26,000 households with homestead vegetable gardening kits (see Smallholder Agriculture Competitiveness Project under joint programmes).

WFP provided food assistance to 2.3 million people (1.4 million nationals, 900,000 refugees, and 22,547 persons with disabilities). This included 67,604 million tonnes of food transfers and USD104,294,053 of cash transfers. Some 100,00 pregnant women were reached through WFP's Mother and Child Benefit Programme and 2.7 million children received fortified biscuits. A total



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

of 119,899 people (46 per cent of them female) across the country, including in hard-to-reach areas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, received food packages from UNDP. In response to an urgent request from National Nutrition Services, UNICEF supplied therapeutic milk and other materials to all 380 of the country's facilities treating children with severe acute malnutrition. A total of 165,700 girls and 36,500 boys aged 10–16 years received nutrition interventions, with iron and folic acid supplementation included for girls. Some 21.51 million children aged 6–59 months (97 per cent of the target population) were reached through a four-week National Vitamin A Plus Campaign. The Dhaka Tribune reported: "This campaign was a model for how public programs should be in these times."

165,700 girls and 36,500 boys aged 10–16 years received nutrition interventions

To ensure food assistance to the urban poor during the nationwide lockdown, both cash transfers and in-kind support were provided. A total of 69,660 households across 17 cities/towns received digital cash transfers. A total of 7,900 households in urban slums of Dhaka North and South City Corporation received food baskets. The food assistance enabled recipients to secure food for at least two weeks.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

In 2020, UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, UNDP) provided extensive support to enhance the access of the most vulnerable groups to WASH services. This was especially significant in the context of the need for hand hygiene during the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN supported distribution of hygiene items, installation of handwashing and sanitation facilities, and access to improved safe water sources. UN agencies provided the Government with technical assistance to develop guidelines for COVID-19 prevention such as wearing masks, hand washing, social distancing, and cleaning surfaces with disinfectants. UNICEF supported development of the WASH Sector Strategy Paper for COVID-19 that helped leverage resources from international financial institutions and development partners for the national COVID-19 response. UNICEF also contributed to

development of the Hand Hygiene for All roadmap with the aim to make hand hygiene a pillar of all public health interventions in Bangladesh. WHO provided technical assistance to the Government to develop WASH standards and guidelines for health care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergency situations. UNDP supported approximately 4 million people across 20 cities, Cox's Bazar, and the remotest areas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with

hygiene items, cash for immediate needs, food assistance, personal protective equipment for staff of City Corporations, and installation of 3,256 handwashing facilities.

More than 600,000 people received support for safely managed water sources; 400,000 people received assistance for safely managed sanitation facilities; and 96,000 people received support for access to improved water sources. A total of 436,151 people benefited from community-led total sanitation, bucket chlorination, and installation of handwashing devices, including 101 pedal-operated devices in religious schools, early childhood development para centres, and health care facilities. Over the course of the response to Cyclone Amphan and monsoon floods, UNICEF provided hygiene promotion for 340,000 people, water source access for 218,722 people and latrine access for 3,761 people with disabilities.

Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

In 2020 UN agencies supported a range of initiatives to address the massive disruption of livelihoods caused by the pandemic. UNICEF, World Bank, ILO, BRAC, a2i (UNDP) and the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry had launched GenU Bangladesh in 2019 as a Government-led, private sector- driven initiative and multi-stakeholder platform with an ambitious vision to create 17 million new opportunities for skills development, apprenticeship,

employment and entrepreneurship for youth by 2024. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, GenU Bangladesh repurposed eight national-level targets to address the impact on the market and young people's ability to learn and transit from education and training to decent work.



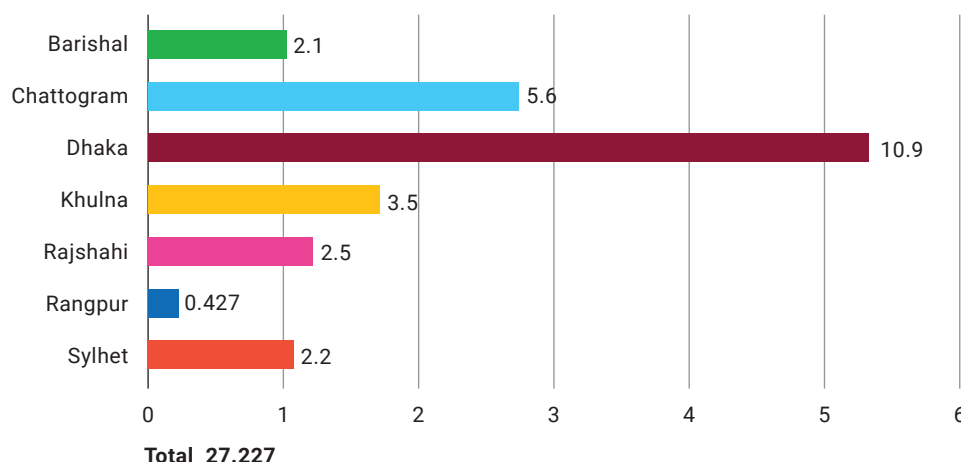
Photo: ILO Bangladesh

ILO supported development of a Draft National Skills Development Policy in 2020 along with the future of work policy (green jobs and skills). ILO also developed a national skills action plan and information management system (IMS) for the Government. ILO continued to support the productivity enhancement of MSMEs through a value chain and market system development approach that includes training and other forms of capacity building.

UN Women trained 60 gender-based violence (GBV) survivors on industrial garments machine operation as a step toward decent employment; supported 200 returnee migrant workers with dignity kits and income generating activities; and reached more than 655 youth with online entrepreneurship training.

UNDP helped improve agricultural skills of 23,040 people in ethnic minority communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts (53 per cent of them female); leveraged USD13 million of government

DIVISION WISE VULNERABLE POORS (IN MILLION)



Source: GOB Covid-19 Impact & Recovery Management System (31 March 2021)
<https://covidrecovery.idare.io/>

funds to improve the living conditions of urban poor by providing low-cost housing and land tenure; developed job skills of 22,750 youth; supported 1,140 vulnerable households (52 per cent women) in the coastal zones with climate-resilient agriculture and fisheries; and contributed to improving the livelihoods of 1,600 households in host communities in Cox's Bazar. FAO, through implementing partner 'training of trainer activities', supported 54,090 farmers with technology adaptation, climate smart and disaster resilient practices, and commercialization of high value produce.

IFAD provided a loan of USD18 million to the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation to support and complement the Government's efforts to revitalize the rural economy. The loan will support creating jobs, rebuilding microenterprises and supporting smallholders who were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This support aims to enhance the resilience of value chains by establishing a multi-purpose digital platform for marketing of goods and services.

SUPPORT TO MIGRANTS

As Bangladesh stands committed as one of the pioneering 'champion' countries for Global Compact for Migration (GCM) implementation and review, the Bangladesh United Nations Network on Migration (BDUNNM) continues to support the Government of Bangladesh in areas of policy coherence and advocacy initiatives. In March 2020, the BDUNNM, in partnership with the Government, organized a seminar on 'Significance and Scope of Migration in the 8FYP' for more than 70 representatives from the Government, members of the BDUNNM and its Technical Working Groups.



Photo: UNRCO Bangladesh

In June 2020, the BDUNNM members developed a Joint Strategic Plan for Returning Migrants post-COVID-19 to supplement the Government's response plan. The Strategic Plan provides details on pre-departure, on-arrival assistance and reintegration and recovery interventions. The BDUNNM provided strategic guidance on how COVID-19 will impact the implementation of GCM, building on the Secretary General's call to reimagine human mobility, to promote inclusive COVID-19 preparedness, prevention, response and recovery measures that protect human rights and enhances the positive development effects of human mobility. The BDUNNM, in collaboration with the civil society platform Civil Society for GCM, conducted an e-workshop on 'GCM National Action Plan and Well-being of Returnees and Migrants Abroad During the Pandemic.' The objectives of the e-workshop were to provide inputs from civil society to the draft GCM National Action Plan, to prioritize GCM objectives and to gather perspectives from civil society organizations on the well-being of returnee migrants and migrants abroad during the pandemic.

On 11 June 2020, the Counter Trafficking in Persons Working Group supported the BDUNNM to publish an Op-ed on the urgent, coordinated efforts needed to address human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic. An Op-ed titled 'Women Migrant Workers and the COVID-19 Crisis' was published in the Daily Star on 18 December 2020 and a joint article titled 'Building Back Better' was published in the International Migrants Day (IMD) Souvenir 2020.

Additional assistance provided in 2020 included assessments of and grants through mobile banking to vulnerable returnee migrants to cover food, medical needs, and transportation costs upon return. Additional stimulus grants of USD118 were given to each returnee who received the reintegration grant previously, to meet their basic immediate needs.

Recognizing the particular vulnerability of women migrants, the UN conducted several interventions to support and engage women migrant workers. Under a UN Women cash for

work scheme, returning women migrant workers created 10,000 dignity packages that included basic food items, masks, health and hygiene products, and distributed them in 10 geographic areas. A group of returnee women received training and are now engaged in mask production.

Several assessments were conducted in coordination with the BDUNNM on Rapid Assessment Needs and Vulnerabilities of returnee migrants in Bangladesh due to the pandemic. The evidence generated contributed to the formulation of policy documents. IOM also supported the Government in hosting a migrant-focused online platform for dissemination of information and in maintaining a database for returnee migrants.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

The Local Government Initiative on Climate Change (LoGIC) is a UN joint initiative that has emerged as a system to deliver climate finance to 17,000 of the most vulnerable, primarily female-led, hard-to-reach households in 72 Union Parishads. Learning from LoGIC informed the Government's plan for replication of the system across the nation. The project contributed to strengthening an oversight mechanism for public climate financing through adoption of a climate performance audit, which will ensure efficiency and effectiveness of climate investment and ultimately benefit climate-vulnerable communities and groups across the country.

UNDP contributed to mainstreaming renewable energy and green growth in the Perspective Plan 2021-41 and the 8th Five Year Plan through preparation of the National Solar Energy Road

Map 2021-2041. FAO strengthened the capacity of the Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI), providing training that will help food security in Bangladesh adapt to climate change through better data on crop suitability and yield gaps. FAO also contributed to the formulation of the project 'Blue Carbon for the Future: Enhancing the Role of Sundarbans Ecosystem Services and Conservation of Carbon Stocks' with a view to promoting conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks in mangroves and supporting climate resilient and eco-friendly agricultural technologies for forest communities.

In 2020, UNDP also provided support to form Village Common Forests and Reserved Forest Management Committees by local villagers, which have effectively managed 10,113 hectares of forests, engaging 59,507 local villagers (52 per cent of them women) for improved natural resources management in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The UN in Bangladesh responded jointly to the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by stepping up its gender mainstreaming in the UN's programming frameworks, in its inputs to the Government's 8FYP, and through specific gender-targeted action. UN Women set up the Gender Monitoring Network, a CSO network for sharing information and lessons on COVID-19's impact on gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV). The network, which consists of 28 women's rights organizations, networks and activists working with women, girls and gender-diverse communities, informed UN actions and the UN's recommendations to the Government.

UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF developed a joint plan with the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs to address the rise in violence against women and children as a result of COVID-19. The plan covers strengthening advocacy, knowledge management and communication on GBV prevention and response; strengthening support for effective and quality multi-sectorial service; and promoting livelihoods and economic opportunities.

Three Rapid Gender Analyses were produced through the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, consisting of UN agencies, national and international NGOs and CSOs, focusing on Cyclone Amphan, the 2020 monsoon floods and COVID-19. The UNFPA-led interagency GBV cluster, including national and international NGOs, developed a full-fledged GBV contingency and preparedness plan in response to monsoon and cyclone-related disasters. UNFPA also provided information on the availability of GBV services to 587,260 women and girls through a community outreach programme at the local level.

In response to SG's call for 'Peace in the Homes,' the UNCT stepped up high-level engagement and advocacy with policymakers on actions to address the increase in violence against women. This was done in July 2020 – even before the systemwide Political Engagement Strategy on GBV was fully formulated. Coordinated by UN Women, the RC led a meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament to discuss GBV, together with the Heads of UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP. The UN jointly also issued a statement to stand against rape when a chain of high-profile sexual violence cases resulted in mass demonstrations in early October 2020. The UNRC and Heads of Agencies spoke out both publicly and in closed forums on GBV to support action by decision-makers and to mobilize the public.



Photo: UN Women Bangladesh

For example, the Strategic Executive Group co-chairs (UNRC, UNHCR and IOM Representatives) successfully advocated with the Principal Staff Officer, AFD, PMO for measures to improve women's security in the Rohingya refugee camps. As a result, the PSO sent a Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse directive to Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MODMR) Secretary and senior officials in charge of security in the refugee camps.

During the 16 Days of Activism, a National Dialogue on gender-based violence jointly organized by the UN in Bangladesh attracted high level participation from Government and civil society representatives and increased public attention to the need to step up action in the COVID-19 response and recovery to address GBV issues.

SDG DATA AND MONITORING

The UN agencies provided technical support to the SDG Coordinator's office in preparing the second VNR 2020. This included analysis of environmental dimensions and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. The UN also supported local and national-level SDG consultations providing inputs on SDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, and 16, and UNCT also assisted the Government in mounting studies for the SDG Progress Report 2020.

The availability of disaggregated SDG data assumes greater importance during a pandemic as existing vulnerabilities and structural inequalities worsen and the most vulnerable groups need to be tracked and targeted for additional support. The UN worked with the Government across ministries to provide technical assistance and build capacity to generate data for monitoring the SDGs.



The UN Data Group worked to address the SDG data gaps and ensure disaggregated data, including by sex/gender, age, ethnicity, disability, migratory status and religion. The UN Data Group mobilized funding for strengthening the collaboration of National Statistical System agencies through formalizing data and metadata exchange processes and promoting the use of standard methodologies. Significant progress was made on data collection for SDG indicator 5.4.1 on measuring unpaid care work. With UN Women's technical support, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) launched a Time-Use Survey for the first time to generate globally comparable data official statistics for the SDG indicator on unpaid care work. Field data collection will take place in early 2021 and results will be available by mid-2021.

The national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework of SDGs was strengthened by updating baseline data and targets for gender related indicators of all SDG targets. The UN provided technical inputs to the General Economic Division, Ministry of Planning in updating

the SDG M&E Framework and integrating SDG 5 indicators fully into it. The M&E framework was published in April 2020 and all ministries and divisions were instructed to use the framework for SDG implementation and reporting.

UNDP Bangladesh, in partnership with the Bangladesh Parliament and Government of Bangladesh, developed and launched the first-ever parliamentary constituency-based SDG tracker. The My Constituency SDG Tracker is a user-friendly digital tool, accessible both on the web and as a mobile app, that provides up-to-date data on SDG progress disaggregated to the level of localities or constituencies to the Members of the Parliament of Bangladesh. It will aid MPs in evidence-based decision-making, help them formulate inclusive development plans and set priorities for their constituencies.

UN Data Group's technical assistance in strengthening the collaboration of National Statistical Agencies through formalizing SDG data and metadata exchange processes.

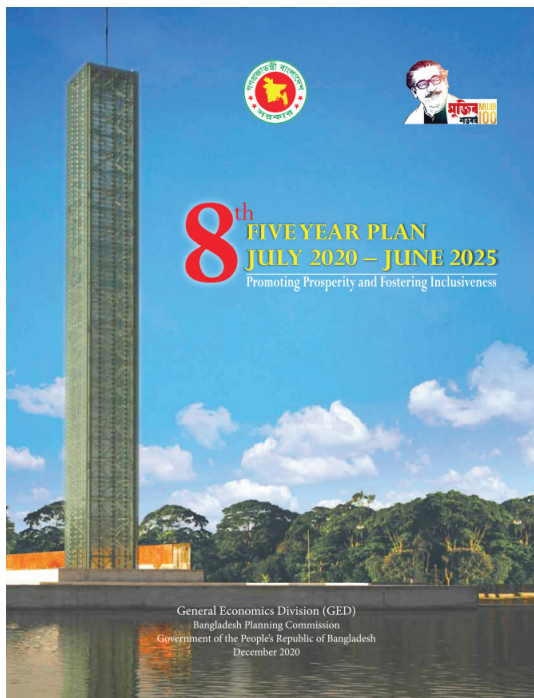
SUPPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT ON LDC GRADUATION



With Bangladesh getting ready to get out the LDC category, the RCO supported dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners and academics, to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC category and explore feasible policy options for the Government of Bangladesh for a smooth transition out of LDC status.

UN DESA and UNCTAD provided the Government with the ex-ante impact assessment and vulnerability profile. While the ex-ante impact assessment focused on the consequences of the withdrawal of international support measures (ISMs) for LDCs in the areas of trade and development cooperation, the vulnerability profile provided background information on Bangladesh's economic and development situation and identified other structural features of relevance for the graduation decision. Following up on the reports, the UN (RCO together with UNESCAP) in collaboration with the Government, facilitated national level discussions to help policymakers and other stakeholders understand the graduation milestone in terms of structural transformation and social progress along with probable next steps for the country's smooth transition out of the LDC status.

SUPPORT TO GOVERNMENT ON THE 8TH FIVE YEAR PLAN



The UN in Bangladesh, jointly and independently, provided extensive support to the Government of Bangladesh in devising its 8th Five-Year Plan (8FYP) through analytics, consultation, and necessary background research. Based on the quick analyses of socio-economic impact of COVID-19 under ISERP, the UN provided a set of recommendations to the Government of Bangladesh for incorporation in the 8FYP.

UNDP provided technical and coordination support to the formulation of the 8FYP for the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to make it more aligned to Agenda 2030. UNDP also contributed to making the 8FYP risk informed by incorporating COVID-19 response dimensions in 13 sector development strategies, including social protection. With a steadfast focus on Agenda 2030, the UN mobilized the Municipal

Association of Bangladesh (MAB), the platform of Mayors and Municipal Councilors, for policy dialogue on the Urban Chapter; developed several knowledge products for evidence-based policymaking and review of SDG implementation; incorporated LNOB in the medium-term development plan of Bangladesh through preparation of a background study; supported incorporating measurement of gender equality in the Development Results Framework through inclusion of nine gender-focused indicators; and helped GoB review the draft 8FYP through series of stakeholders' consultations.

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UNFPA supported incorporation of a population and development section in the 8FYP, developed eight thematic policy papers for policy advocacy that were referred to by policymakers in various forums, and produced five policy briefs for advocacy at the national and local levels in collaboration with various partners on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on RH and MCH services, population density and vulnerability, active aging and healthy life expectancy, ending child marriage, childhood mortality reduction, and support and care for the older populations. ILO supported the National Job Strategy and draft national employment policy along with the World Bank, which were used by GoB in finalizing the 8FYP. ILO also supported development of a national skills action plan and information management system (IMS) linked to SDGs and 8FYP indicators.

2.3 JOINT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE EFFORTS

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS



Photo: ISCG

Under the leadership of the Government of Bangladesh, the humanitarian community continued to support protection and solutions for Rohingya¹ refugees in Bangladesh and to provide support to vulnerable households in the host community. 2020 marked the third year since the majority of the Rohingya refugee population in Cox's Bazar fled Myanmar, and some 860,000 Rohingya refugees residing in 34 overcrowded camps in the Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas² of Cox's Bazar District remained entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance. More than 450,000 vulnerable Bangladeshis living in the host communities most affected by the arrival of refugees were also in need of humanitarian support.

The 2020 JRP for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis was a prioritized appeal of USD 1.06 billion for 135 partners, including 9 UN agencies, 58 international NGOs (INGOs) and 68 Bangladeshi

1 The Government of Bangladesh refers to the Rohingya as “Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals.” The UN system refers to this population as Rohingya refugees, in line with the applicable international framework.

2 Upazilas are administrative units in Bangladesh. Districts are divided into Upazilas (or sub-Districts) and then Unions, wards and villages.



Photo: UNHCR Bangladesh

NGOs.³ This included USD 181 million for COVID-19 response for April-December. Donors responded by providing significant resources, with 59 per cent of the requested funding (USD 629 million) received as of the end of 2020.

Four strategic objectives guided the humanitarian response in 2020: (1) continue to strengthen the protection of Rohingya refugee

women, men, girls and boys; (2) deliver quality, lifesaving assistance to populations in need; (3) foster the well-being of Bangladeshi host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas; and (4) work toward achieving sustainable solutions in Myanmar.

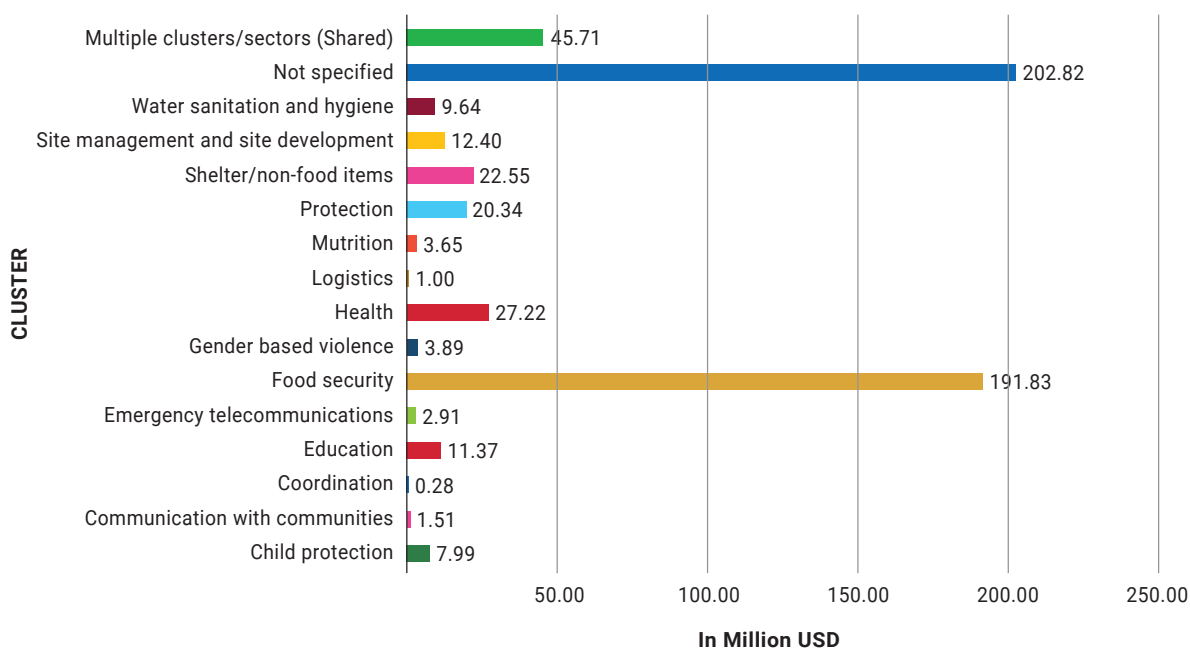
The COVID-19 Response Plan introduced three additional strategic priorities: (1) reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality among Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi people in Cox's Bazar District; (2) ensure protection of human rights, social cohesion, food security, self-reliance and livelihoods by maintaining and extending critical services; and (3) protect, assist and advocate for particularly vulnerable Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi people.

The Government, UN agencies, and Bangladeshi and international NGOs joined forces to significantly expand the health response by building 14 Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) to serve the refugee and host communities, and to establish an Intensive Care Unit at primary referral hospital in the District. The Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) Field Laboratory in the Cox's Bazar Medical College was supported with human

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3 Of these partners, 58 appealed for funds through the 2020 JRP and the COVID-19 Response Plan and 123 are implementing partners, with 46 organizations having the status of both appealing organizations and implementing partners for different projects. In the JRP 2020, there were 160 projects with 117 partners (61 BNGO, 8 UN agencies, 48 international NGOs). In the COVID-19 Addendum there were 63 new COVID-19 projects with 72 partners (34 BNGOs, 9 UN agencies and 29 international NGOs).

JRP 2020: FUNDED BY CLUSTERS



resources, equipment and supplies to carry out COVID-19 PCR testing for refugees and Bangladeshis.

To ensure the delivery of the most critical services, refugee and host community volunteers in the camps played an increasingly critical role in the humanitarian response. Humanitarian partners put in place remote management systems and worked together across sectors to streamline activities where possible and carry out aid distributions in ways to minimize exposure as well as rapidly roll out Infection Prevention and Control measures in the camps and across the District. An inter-sector strategy to help protect some 30,000 refugees over the age of 59 in all 34 camps was developed and implemented. Emergency cash and food assistance was expanded to 1 million vulnerable Bangladeshi households in the District to help mitigate food and livelihood insecurity caused by COVID-19, and to help mitigate inter-community tensions. Across sectors, the humanitarian community scaled up RCCE activities and implemented a targeted strategy for the protection of older Rohingya refugees and other vulnerable groups while taking into consideration the gendered impacts of COVID-19.⁴

Across Cox's Bazar, 521,335 people were provided with safe drinking water and sanitation, and 424,778 people were reached with hygiene promotion and behaviour change programming.

Cluster-wise funds mobilized are presented in figure.

4 Rapid Gender Analysis, "In the Shadows of the Pandemic: the Gendered Impact of COVID-19 on Rohingya and Host Communities, October 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented pronounced challenges to humanitarian work. The scope of humanitarian operations was narrowed to critical, life-saving services significantly scaling back the presence of UN agencies and NGOs in the camps. This helped contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the reduced footprint of humanitarian staff and services contributed to the deterioration of both physical structures as well as the protection environment in the camps. A concerning uptick in negative coping mechanisms, including dangerous onward movements, early marriages and human trafficking, were reported. Child protection issues surfaced with the extended closure of learning centres and schools.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

In line with the approved HCTT 2020 workplan and building on the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD) 2019, which recognize the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) and the cluster system coordination mechanism including Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (CMCoord), the national humanitarian coordination system continued to be reinforced according to best global practices.

In 2020, a Displacement Management Cluster (DMC) linked to the global Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM) cluster was established; a Localization Technical Working Group (LTWG) was put in place; and a Private Sector Working Group was set up, all of which contributed to better emergency preparedness and response efforts. The revised humanitarian cluster architecture is available [here](#). These efforts, which promote predictability of the coordination of humanitarian affairs and facilitate humanitarian stakeholders' engagement, are supported by concerned national authorities, notably the MoDMR.

The COVID-19 Anticipatory Multisectoral Impact and Needs Analysis report issued by the Needs Assessment Working Group provided information on the correlation between the anticipated impacts of the pandemic and the districts most vulnerable to climate-related disasters. Based on that information, the HCTT developed a contingency plan for climate-related disasters in the context of COVID-19 that covered cyclones, floods and landslides.

The HCTT also produced the 2020 Humanitarian Preparedness and Response Plan (HPRP) for climate-related disasters, designed to enhance the humanitarian community's ability to jointly support response efforts led by the Government of Bangladesh with speed, volume and quality and to provide the required framework for a



Photo: WHO Bangladesh

HCTT-coordinated response to a climate-related disaster once concerned components of the HPRP are activated. The 2020 HPRP took into account the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and included updated preparedness and response packages of humanitarian clusters and working groups. The MoDMR approved of all these documents, which allowed the humanitarian community to respond rapidly and deliver results.

In 2020, with RCO's support, the MoDMR and Armed Forces Division participated in consultations and sessions of the Regional Consultative Group for Asia-Pacific on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination. RCO also supported the development of the US CFE-DM 2020 Handbook and the Australian's ACMC's 2020 publication Towards a Predictable Model.

In 2020, the humanitarian community also collaborated with the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit and the Regional UNEP Office to organize a webinar on Environment and Emergencies, including an orientation session on the Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT). The HCTT contingency plan for Earthquake will be revised to take into consideration potential prioritized environmental impact of such a disaster.

Response and Recovery



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

In 2020, two coordinated HCTT responses to climate-related disasters took place in line with the HPRP: Cyclone Amphan Response and Monsoon Floods Response. For the first time in the history of Bangladesh, HCTT's resource mobilization efforts were reflected at global level in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP).

In collaboration with all clusters and working group coordinators, the RCO coordinated the development of the HCTT Humanitarian Response Plan for Cyclone Amphan (see latest 4Ws report and Monitoring Dashboard report), which includes a CERF Rapid Response Allocation of USD5 million. The RCO also coordinated the development of the HCTT Response Plan to the most prolonged monsoon floods since 1988, which includes a two-track approach: a life-saving approach and an early recovery approach (see latest 4Ws report and Monitoring Dashboard report). Both these plans were evidence-based (refer to related Joint Needs Assessments) and strongly prioritized. The Joint Needs Assessment for the floods included for the first time a contextualized INFORM

Index to identify priorities of HCTT complementary support to the Government-led response. The HCTT Technical Working Group on Localization monitored progress on the Localization Agenda in line with the recommendations of the Localization Baseline Assessment (background documents and updates here). Approximately USD25 million was mobilized by the humanitarian community against the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) and 1.1 million people were assisted.

Thanks to USD5.2 million allocation by CERF for anticipatory action, humanitarian assistance delivered to more than 220,000 people before peak floods hit.

The Under-Secretary General/Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG/ERC) allocated CERF funding to pilot Anticipatory Action in anticipation of severe flooding in Bangladesh, the objective of which was to deliver a more effective, timely and dignified humanitarian response to vulnerable communities exposed to the risk of flooding. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, the pilot was supported by three UN agencies – WFP, FAO and UNFPA – as well as the Bangladesh Red Crescent (BDRCS). The funding enabled the UN agencies and partners to distribute cash, livestock feed, storage drums, and hygiene, dignity and health kits in pre-identified districts. Building on existing structures and experiences by the IFRC, WFP and the Government of Bangladesh, the framework was set up in two months. In early July, the framework was triggered. CERF launched the fund's fastest-ever allocation of USD5.2 million, and as a result, agencies were able to deliver humanitarian assistance to more than 220,000 people before the peak floods hit.

More than 1,700 first responders (1,238 Disaster Management Committee members, 246 Cyclone Preparedness Programme Volunteers, 239 Flood Preparedness Programme Volunteers) received training on gender-responsive disaster response and resilience building. The first ever gender responsive disaster management plan, 'National Plan for Disaster Management 2021-2025,' was developed by MoDMR with support from National Resilience Programme, a nationally executed joint UN programme.

In 2020, two RCO-coordinated joint missions took place, one in the North part of the country with IFRC, UN Women, WFP, FCDO and ECHO, and one in the South with the cluster and working group coordinators and NGOs. The Lessons Learned from these sessions are available here.

Humanitarian-Development Nexus

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics launched the Sex, Age and Disability Disaggregated Data (SADDD) Protocol and guideline integrating gender and social inclusion in Climate Change and Disaster Related Statistics with technical support from UN Women through the National Resilience Programme. This guideline is the first of its kind in the region.

Given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, all activities implemented in 2020 aimed to better integrate disaster risk reduction (DRR) in humanitarian responses. The UN worked as



Photo: UNFPA Bangladesh

part of the HCTT and the clusters to promote nexus in humanitarian action. To facilitate this, the UN developed a handbook on humanitarian coordination and collaboration that details the Strategic Preparedness for Response and Resilience to Disaster (SPEED) approach, which promotes Humanitarian-Development Nexus interventions and around which the 2021 HCTT workplan was developed.

Extensive consultations conducted in 2020 with the humanitarian community and the Government of Bangladesh and supported by OCHA ROAP resulted in an agreement to establish an Information Management Working Group in collaboration with the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) that will contribute to the achievement of the Disaster Management Vision of the Government of Bangladesh—to reduce the risk of population from the effects of natural, environmental and human induced hazards, and to have in place an efficient emergency response system capable of handling large scale disasters.

2.4 LESSONS LEARNED

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency and accompanying deterioration in economic and social conditions necessitated an unprecedented response across sectors and involving all UN agencies. As the pandemic unfolded, coordination supported by a dedicated interagency support team ensured continued monitoring of response activities, ongoing multisectoral engagement, and early detection of changing conditions requiring adjusting programmes and the response.

These integrated planning efforts not only aligned inputs and reduced redundant contributions among partners, but also enabled rapid design and rollout of novel community-level risk mitigation interventions, such as the Community Support Teams, to complement the health system response. The Community Support Teams promoted essential prevention behaviour including mask-wearing and hand washing and supported symptomatic and vulnerable individuals at higher risk of severe disease. These community-based interventions are the foundation for a sustained pandemic response that minimizes the impact on vulnerable people's livelihoods. Promoting the use of locally made masks also brought benefits to the local economy, creating income for micro- and small enterprises. The overall lesson learned was the importance of a multisectoral response to the pandemic emergency and a coherent response from the UN.

2.5 SUPPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA

Bangladesh was one of the first countries globally to complete a development finance assessment (in 2016) and devise its SDG Financing Strategy (in 2017). The assessment and the strategy now need to be reviewed and updated to take into account the impact of LDC graduation on availability of development finance, and the impact of the pandemic on the global economy and national needs.

In July 2020, UNDP, ILO, UNCDF, and UN Women started implementing the joint programme INFF for SDGs (INFF4SDGs) in Bangladesh (see box on joint programmes). The joint programme achieved three key outputs in 2020 in addition to providing inputs into the 8FYP. The Economic Relations Division (ERD) of Ministry of Finance and UN agencies jointly organized an Inception Workshop of INFF4SDGs and convened more than 10 stakeholders across the public and private sectors for familiarization, buy-in and commitment to jointly implement the programme. Agencies organized a private sector workshop on investments in relation to SDGs, particularly in the INFF priority areas: water and sanitation, renewable energy and climate finance. The workshop convened more than 60 private companies and financial institutions, including IFIs (WB, ADB) to discuss market analytics and financing instruments for these sectors. The information will be used to build a database to be used to update the development finance assessment and financing strategy incorporating a private sector perspective; develop knowledge products to facilitate partnership building on SDG financing in the marketplace; and inform internal UN discussions to further tailor the scope of UN support to SDG financing. UN agencies designed a set of options for a governance mechanism for SDG financing which were presented to the Principal SDG Coordinator's Office. Adoption of the governance mechanism is expected in the next SDG Implementation and Review Committee meeting, which will open the door to create multi-stakeholder platforms for SDG-specific financing roadmaps.

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2.6 RESULTS OF THE UN WORKING MORE AND BETTER TOGETHER: UN COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

HUMAN RIGHTS



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges to the human rights of the most vulnerable groups in the country. This necessitated enhanced and new modalities of outreach on human rights to partners and greater efforts under circumstances that rendered human rights-related advocacy and programming more difficult, given the pandemic lockdown. The UN's inter-agency efforts were coordinated by the Inter-Agency Human Rights Working Group.

Bangladesh is a State Party to eight of the nine core UN human rights conventions and has been cooperating with the UPR process throughout the first three cycles. In the third Cycle of UPR in 2018, Bangladesh supported 178 of 251 recommendations. Two workshops, one in February and one in August, took place in 2020. The UN provided coordination support and technical assistance for those workshops, which laid solid ground for the action plan. In the first workshop, participants reviewed a selected list of 57 supported recommendations and in the second, participants discussed 40 recommendations. In 2020, the UN system came together to provide coordinated support to the Government on three fronts for implementation of UPR recommendations. UNDP worked closely with National Human Rights Commission to support implementing UPR recommendations. UNFPA led on gender-related recommendations. The overall inter-ministerial process was coordinated by RCO. The Government agreed to develop an action plan for UPR recommendations through four workshops with key line ministries and other stakeholders.

The pandemic led to an unprecedented closure of courts across the country, creating increasing case backlogs and tensions between public health concerns and the protection of fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh. In response, UNDP worked in collaboration with the judicial leadership and the Government to launch a virtual

courts platform – Mycourt – in May 2020. By August 2020, 1,026 judges, lawyers and court officials were trained on the MyCourt system; 42,894 bail applications were received; 14,911 virtual hearings were held; 10,523 persons including women inmates were released on bail; and the prison population was thereby reduced by 11.95 per cent in just three months, thus significantly decreasing the risk of COVID-19 infections in the prison system.

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND SOCIAL COHESION



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

RCO continued to facilitate coordination, dialogue and knowledge platforms on conflict prevention to share briefs as well as bring in various practitioners to inform key stakeholders about the growing risks of radicalization and violent extremism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through UNDP's COVID-19 data initiatives, evidence-based data was disseminated to the Government, UN

agencies, development partners, and local media – focusing on the social and political impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. This work contributed to shaping the COVID-19 'policy conversation' in the country to mitigate social tension, stigmatization and discrimination that emerged around the pandemic. This data-driven analysis helped guide the national COVID-19 response. UNDP's inclusive awareness campaign reached 18 million people and helped address stigmatization and discrimination around COVID-19.

UN Women provided support to enhance effective participation of women and youth in promoting peace and social cohesion. A total of 156 young women and men strengthened their skills on social entrepreneurship and engaged in the Women Peace Ambassador initiative under the Women Peace Café (WPC), a university-based platform for female social entrepreneurs, to support women affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The participation of 16 male volunteers in the platform this year was driven by interest among these male champions in supporting their female peers to promote the messages of peace and social cohesion. The WPC members successfully organized various virtual events to promote tolerance and inclusion, especially given the context of increased misinformation, hate speech and misogyny in the virtual space during the COVID-19 pandemic. WPC members also used social media as an effective means of spreading their message of peace and to address issues of gender inequality and GBV. More than 807,800 people were reached with those messages through WPC social media pages.

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND THE LOCAL CONSULTATIVE GROUP

The Local Consultative Group (LCG) is the formal mechanism of collective dialogue between the Government and development partners to discuss development policy and implementation of critical sectoral/thematic issues. In 2020, under the LCG platform, several dialogues (Bangladesh Development Forum, GOB-DP plenary on draft 8FYP and thematic LCG working Group meetings) were organized.

In upholding the spirit of partnership for sustainable development, the Government of Bangladesh convened the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) in January 2020 with a wide range of development partners and stakeholders. UNCT supported ERD through a Joint Task Team with development partners in organizing a highly successful BDF 2020. The forum created the opportunity to build partnerships among the stakeholders to identify implementation challenges and policy or resource gaps and inform the development of the 8FYP. This two-day event was inaugurated by the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. More than 2,000 national and international experts and stakeholders, including young people, participated. The forum involved a multi-stakeholder consultation on national development priorities, taking stock of stakeholder assessments of selected priority areas that are likely to impact Bangladesh's long-term development plans, including the 8FYP, Agenda 2030, and Vision 2041.

In upholding the spirit of partnership for sustainable development, the Government of Bangladesh convened the Bangladesh Development Forum in January 2020 with a wide range of development partners and stakeholders.

UNRC's Office, as the LCG DP Secretariat, supported two LCG Plenary events on the draft 8FYP. These events on the draft 8FYP plan were well coordinated. The DP members provided harmonized feedback on the draft 8FYP.

The UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) is the Co-Chair of the LCG alongside the Secretary, Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance. Along with the Head of Aid, Canada, UNRC also leads the LCG Executive Committee – a forum that serves as the executive organ of the development partners group. Throughout 2020, the LCG Executive Committee's meetings were organized virtually to facilitate in-depth dialogues and coordinated support for COVID-19 response and recovery.

In 2020 LCG thematic and sectoral Working Groups (including agriculture, health, WASH, and gender) supported the respective line ministries through effective dialogues in their respective arenas. For instance, MOA and FAO organized the LCG Working Group on Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Development meeting to discuss the priority actions exclusively to address the impact of COVID-19 on agriculture supply chain and crop production.

INCREASED UN'S VISIBILITY

Increased UN's visibility through outreach activities, the celebration of international days, effective media relations and outreach to civil society and youth



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

In the midst of the uncertainties and stresses of the pandemic, the UN@75 celebrations provided a chance to engage with the youth of Bangladesh in a positive and forward-looking manner. The UN Communications Group took the lead in planning and implementing a series of events and processes that reached some 4 million people. Funded by a grant from the Office of the SG's Special Advisor on UN@75,

the activities included a dialogue with the Model United Nations Clubs, a digital art contest, an online debate competition, and an online concert. The winning artwork from the contest was incorporated into the One-UN calendar prepared by the UNCG. The UN global one-minute survey was translated into Bangla and approximately 10,000 people from Bangladesh completed the survey.

The 75th anniversary of the UN was also an opportunity for reflection. The Center for Peace Studies of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance at North South University in Dhaka, together with the UN in Bangladesh, organized a two-day virtual seminar for several hundred participants to reflect on the successes and challenges of the United Nations over the last 75 years, to draw lessons learned and discuss the way forward. The panels featured academics, civil society leaders and senior UN officials. This seminar provided an important opportunity for the United Nations in Bangladesh to listen to and receive feedback from stakeholders on its direction and strategic priorities.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS STRATEGY

Operations Management Team worked to develop a Business Operations Strategy (BOS) in line with corporate guidelines to eliminate duplication, leverage the UN's common bargaining power, maximize economies of scale, free up more resources for programme delivery, and ensure gender-responsive dimensions in operations. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN system recognized that the BOS presents a unique opportunity for agencies to come together and formalize existing common services and identify new opportunities for a common approach. Following peer review, the BOS was finalized and sent for approval by UNCT. The total budget for implementation of common services under BOS was USD3,046,428, with a funding gap of USD425,935.

DUTY OF CARE

As the pandemic spread across Bangladesh, UN offices continued to function without a break, and the vast majority of international personnel continued to stay and deliver in the country. To ensure the safety and well-being of staff, alternate work modalities were adopted with limited staff presence in office premises and all non-critical staff working from home. Widespread and continuous awareness raising for COVID-19 focal points of UN agencies, partner NGOs and IFIs was conducted on monitoring, tracking and providing medical care for personnel infected with COVID-19. Medical care capacity was expanded by onboarding additional doctors and nurses and securing beds in two hospitals for UN staff who were infected by COVID-19. An ICU ambulance was stationed at Cox's Bazar to enable rapid medevac to Dhaka for personnel who needed advanced care. In the rest of the country, the referral list of medical care providers was expanded and widely disseminated wherever UN personnel were concentrated.

A COVID-19 medical treatment facility was set up in Cox's Bazar for United Nations staff, dependents, and humanitarian and front-line workers. The MOU for the facility was signed by UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM and WFP. Five UN staff and dependents in critical condition were successfully medically evacuated outside the country for treatment. A home care advisory was prepared and disseminated across agencies. Three town-hall meetings were conducted in 2020 for personnel in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, giving staff an opportunity to hear directly from the RC, the WHO Country Representative and the UNDP Resident Representative, who served as the COVID-Coordinator for staff and specialized staff on a wide range of topics related to the pandemic.



Photo: WHO Bangladesh

2.7. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

In 2020 the UN's development programme delivery amounted to USD262 million while programme delivery for flood and cyclone relief amounted to another USD53.2 million.

UN AGENCIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN 2020 (USD)

SL	Agencies	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Grand Total 2020
1	FAO	-	5,589,747	8,010,897	13,600,644
2	IFAD	15,270,000	17,200,000	8,870,000	41,340,000
3	ILO	2,538,903	-	10,291,534	12,830,437
4	IOM	910,000	-	10,900,000	11,810,000
5	UNAIDS	70,000	-	-	70,000
6	UNCDF	1,280,000	2,980,000	1,150,000	5,410,000
7	UNDP	19,275,964	17,799,553	22,131,986	59,207,502
8	UNESCO	803,311.95	-	188,072.48	991,384
9	UNFPA	11,580,000	-	2,860,000	14,440,000
10	UNICEF	38,873,946	1,342,479	8,041,018	48,257,443
11	UNIDO	95,000	-	-	95,000
12	UNODC	1,002,632	-	-	1,002,632
13	UNOPS	780,000	-	-	780,000
14	UNWOMEN	1,610,000	1,370,000	320,000	3,300,000
15	WFP	9,300,000	17,300,000	1,200,000	27,800,000
16	WHO	21,120,000	-	-	21,120,000
	Total	124,509,757	63,581,779	73,963,508	262,055,043

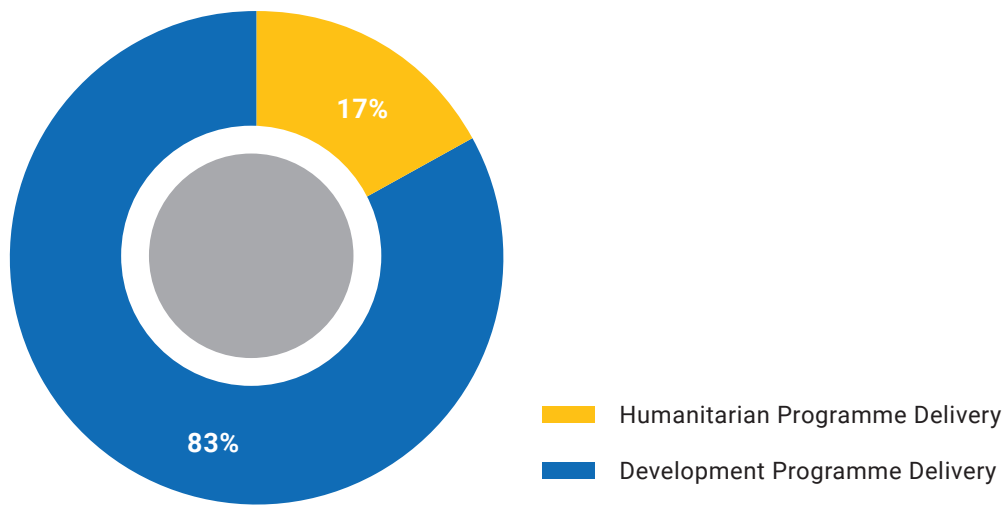
**UN AGENCIES' HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN 2020
(EXCLUDING JRP) (USD)**

SL	Agencies	2020
1	FAO	4,731,546
2	IFAD	-
3	ILO	-
4	IOM	280,000
5	UNAIDS	10,000
6	UNCDF	-
7	UNDP	939,946
8	UNESCO	-
9	UNFPA	5,010,000
11	UNHCR	-
12	UNICEF	13,507,391
13	UNIDO	-
14	UNODC	40,000
15	UNOPS	13,580,000
16	UNWOMEN	480,000
17	WFP	14,600,000
18	WHO	-
	Total	53,178,883

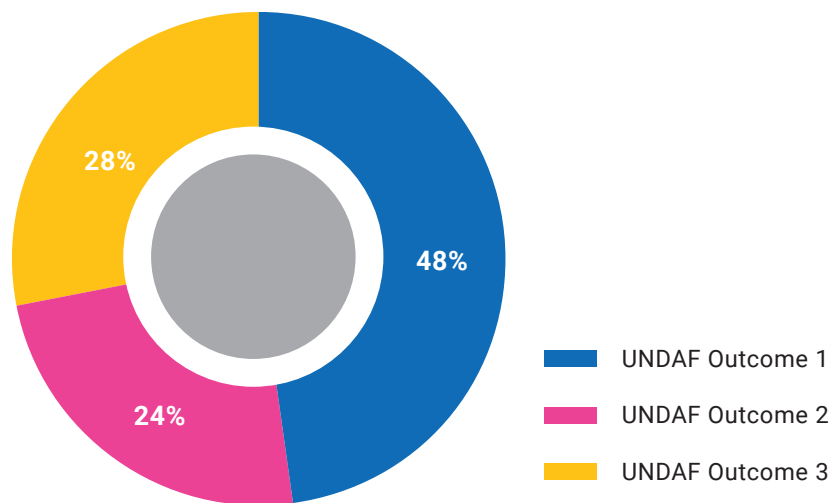
AMOUNT RECEIVED UNDER THE JOINT RESPONSE PLAN (USD)

Agency	Funded
FAO	2,898,045
IOM	86,198,832
UN Women	4,497,857
UNICEF	72,125,263
UNDP	2,770,283
UNHCR	167,567,967
UNFPA	9,546,808
WFP	216,794,125
WHO	5,629,265
Total	568,028,445

UNCT DELIVERY IN 2020*



UN AGENCIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME DELIVERY 2020



* Excluding JRP

CHAPTER 3

UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR 2021

In 2021 the UN in Bangladesh will support the Government in accelerating its progress toward the SDGs.



SDG IMPLEMENTATION

In 2021 the UN in Bangladesh will support the Government in accelerating its progress toward the SDGs, alongside continuing response and recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic under the Immediate Socioeconomic Response Plan, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups. A key element of support will be to provide coherent support to generate, update and use data for monitoring the SDGs.

The UNCT is in the process of formulating its Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 through a multi-stakeholder engagement process. Aligned to the 8th Five Year Plan and co-designed with the Government, the UNSDCF will focus its support on five key priorities – inclusive and sustainable economic development; equitable human development and well-being; sustainable, healthy and resilient environment; transformative, participatory and inclusive governance; and gender equality and empowerment of women.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SG'S PREVENTION AGENDA

Elements of work on leaving no one behind will include: support for implementation of the UPR recommendations; scaled up joint action on the protection and promotion of human



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

rights of all people in line with the SG's Call to Action for Human Rights; coordinated support to the implementation of the Global Compact on Migrants and the well-being of returning migrants; joint UNCT analysis and assessment of the evolving country context, conflict risks and hate speech; coordinated implementation of the Gender Scorecard follow-up Action Plan; and scaled up joint action on ending GBV through the implementation of the Bangladesh Political Engagement Strategy on GBV and COVID-19.

COVID-19 HEALTH AND SOCIOECONOMIC RESPONSE

The UNCT will prioritize support to the Government in its efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic under the continued BPRP. This will include support for rolling out a widespread and equitable vaccination access drive. The UNCT will continue to support the Government in providing a socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis in line with the UN's ISERP. The UNCT also will ensure adequate support and protection to UN personnel.

HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT

The UN in Bangladesh will continue to provide coordinated humanitarian support to the Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar. This will include support to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The most vulnerable groups affected by flood and cyclone in Bangladesh will be provided coordinated multi-sectoral support.

BUSINESS INNOVATION

In 2021, the UN in Bangladesh will advance the implementation of the improved Business Operations Strategy (BOS) focusing on areas of higher efficiency gains for the UN system through the principles of mutual recognition and client satisfaction.