

Event Report

Human Resources Open Day for Gender Equality



Organized by

The United Nations in Bangladesh

Gender Equality Theme Group and Human Resources Working Group,

with support from the UN Communications Group

Date: 09th August 2023, Wednesday

Time: 08:00 AM- 12:30 PM

Venue: The Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka



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Summary

The United Nations in Bangladesh organized the **UN Human Resources Open Day for Gender Equality** on 9th August 2023 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka. The event, co-organized by the Human Resource (HR) Working Group and the Gender Equality Theme Group (GETG), with support from the UN Communications Group (UNCG), aimed at encouraging and orienting women who are interested in pursuing a career with the UN.

Around 80 external participants attended the event to learn about the recruitment processes of the UN, learn from the experiences of women in the UN system in Bangladesh, and explore the work of the UN in Bangladesh. In total, 24 UN agencies are operating in Bangladesh, of which 16 are resident agencies, currently employing approximately 3,523 staff members (as of July 2023).

António Guterres, UN's Secretary General emphasized that management reform must ensure that gender parity is reached sooner rather than later. The initial target for the equal representation of women and men among United Nations staff was the year 2000. Sixteen years later, the UN has yet to reach that goal. The Secretary General pledged to respect gender parity from the start in all his appointments to the Senior Management Group and the Chief Executives Board. He also added that by the end of his mandate, the UN should have reached full gender parity at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels, including special representatives and special envoys.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations in Bangladesh has developed a national [Gender Parity Strategy](#) as part of its commitment to 'lead by example', and demonstrate accountability to ensure equal representation, responding to the Secretary General's call to localize the global UN System-wide Strategy. In the strategy, the UN Country Team in Bangladesh aims to achieve gender parity by 2028, constituting an increase of female staff by five percentage points every two years.

According to data collected by the HR Working Group in 2021, there is an absence of gender parity across all three categories of staff (GS, mid-level, senior level) in the UN in Bangladesh. Thirty-five percent (35%) of all UN personnel in Bangladesh are women, which indicates that gender parity results remain far from the '50/50 by 2026' goal set out by the UN Secretary General. Moreover, women made up merely 31% of the general service personnel (G1-G7) (251 out of 815) as well as 42% (250 out of 593) of the mid-level (NOA, NOB, P1-P3) and senior-level (NOC/P4 and above) employees.¹

The HR Open Day was a pilot event targeting talented women, transgender, and non-binary people interested in a career with the United Nations. It allowed potential future UN employees to hear from and question senior management about pursuing a career in the UN. The participants were also instructed on the application procedure and the requirements for obtaining a position with the UN, while also providing an opportunity for the UN to hear from prospective staff and individuals on what assistance they might require to enter the UN system.

¹ [UN Bangladesh Gender Parity Strategy 2023-2028](#)



This event showcased the dedication of the United Nations in Bangladesh to promote gender equality and create a diverse and inclusive workforce. With around 80 attendees, it served a valuable platform for aspiring women professionals to explore exciting career opportunities with the UN.



Speakers and facilitators (in order of appearance)

Name	Agency	Role
Ms. Naila Fahmin Rasha	UN Resident Coordinator's Office	Master of Ceremonies
Ms. Gitanjali Singh	Country Representative, UN Women	Opening remarks
Ms. Kristine Blokhuis	Country Representative, UNFPA	Opening remarks
Mr. Sudhir Muralidharan	Country Manager, UNOPS	Opening remarks
Mr. Tuomo Poutiainen	Country Director, ILO	Opening remarks
Ms. Sonia Mehzabeen	UN Volunteers Country Coordinator	Presenter
Mr. Md. Sajjadul Islam Chowdhury	UNDP	Presenter & Panelist: HR Q&A
Ms. Shamima Pervin	UNFPA	Moderator: Role Model Panel Discussion
Ms. Reshma Khan Zaman	UN Women	Role model
Ms. Halima Neyamat	UN Resident Coordinator's Office	Role model
Ms. Ujjaene Acharjee	UNHCR	Role model
Ms. Nazma Ara Begum Poppy	UN Women via UN Volunteers	Role model
Ms. Priyanka Chakma	UNFPA	Role model
Ms. Habiba Chowdhury	UNFPA	Moderator: HR Q&A
Ms. Moutushi Chowdhury	UN Women	Moderator: HR Q&A
Ms. Selina Sultana	FAO	Panelist: HR Q&A
Ms. Sadia Hossain	WFP	Panelist: HR Q&A
Ms. Nasrin Chowdhury	UNOPS	Panelist: HR Q&A
Ms. Gwyn Lewis	United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh	Closing remarks



Sessions

Inauguration remarks

Ms. Gitanjali Singh, Country Representative, UN Women Bangladesh, opened the event by giving remarks. In her opening speech she stated that “No country has achieved gender equality yet. Change must start somewhere, and the UN Country Team is committed to walking the talk. This HR Open Day is one step forward, with many more steps to come, including on diversity and inclusion.”

Additionally, she spoke on gender parity. She insisted that gender parity's objectives go beyond numbers. It involves recognizing and dismantling the institutional obstacles and gender norms that prevent women from joining, remaining in, and advancing within the UN. According to data, 46 per cent of people worldwide think that men should have more rights to employment than women². To enable a supportive atmosphere and culture for gender parity and gender equality, both within the UN and beyond, it is essential to address deeply rooted social norms.

Ms. Kristine Blokhuis, Country Representative of UNFPA, reiterated in her speech that “the aim to achieve a 50/50 gender balance within our organization is not just a numerical target; it is a reflection of our dedication to dismantling barriers that hinder opportunities for all genders.”

She also noted that the dedication to building an inclusive workforce is demonstrated by the implementation of the UN Gender Parity Strategy. To ensure that people, particularly women, are able fully participate professionally without sacrificing their personal life, the UN is implementing flexible policies.

She continued to state that it is critical to understand that the UN works toward more than just achieving its objectives and changing laws and policies. Examples of this include advocating for women and girls, encouraging legislative and policy changes, collecting data that is sensitive to gender, and supporting programs that enhance the health and opportunities of these groups of people. While the Gender Parity Strategy serves as a starting point, the UN is dedicated to enabling women from disadvantaged groups to grab opportunities without doubt. Initiatives in the areas of education, mentoring, and empowerment are crucial if women are to succeed in the workforce and advance to leadership roles.

Mr. Sudhir Muralidharan, Country Manager of UNOPS, reflected upon his personal experience of joining the UN later in the career and noted that "you can join the UN at any point in your career - you are never too old to join the UN."

He also spoke on empowerment, transparency, and opportunities. Empowerment is a fundamental principle. The UN invests in the development of their employees by offering chances for skill development, mentorship, and leadership training. By enabling the employees, they are prepared to flourish not only within the organization, but also as global changemakers. Crucial to this is maintaining transparency by

² [2023 Gender Social Norms Index \(GSNI\)](#)



regularly reporting on gender-related metrics and progress as well as encouraging open dialogue and feedback from employees about the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Family-friendly policies are fundamental to a conducive environment. The UN recognizes that their employees have responsibilities outside of work, and it is the UN's responsibility to guarantee that they may fulfill these responsibilities without jeopardizing their professional development. Flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and childcare assistance are not just benefits; they are critical tools that enable employees to efficiently manage their personal and professional life.

Mr. Toumo Poutiainen, Country Director of ILO, highlighted that “gender equality and gender parity matters enormously. The right kind of work, decent work with dignity and equal opportunity for all. That’s what ILO and UN systems stand for.”

According to Mr. Poutiainen, the changeability in work is one of the most important ways for the UN system to walk that walk and talk that talk. It is to create the right kind of environment for safe workplaces, have an open dialogue, promote mutual respects, and non-tolerance for any type of non-respectful behavior.

He stated that the changeability in work is the tool for which we will be able to create the kind of working environment where men and women will be able to work in an environment that allows for mutually recognized right way of working together.

Furthermore, he expressed that when it comes to parenting and parental leave, there are a lot of different solutions, such as creche, breastfeeding facilities, and other ways of accommodating. The UN is implementing flexible working modalities, something that became very familiar during COVID-19. There are many ways that the UN is attempting to facilitate particularly women’s entry to the labor force and to the UN.

He emphasized the voice and representation of women workers in the UN system. It is not just about having a workplace and a workplace of quality; it is also about having an active role voicing concerns or suggestions for improvement. That is what is meant by having a voice. However, having a voice is not enough without representation.

Orientation to the UN recruitment process

An introduction to the UN recruitment process was presented jointly by Mr. Md. Sajjadul Islam Chowdhury, Head of HR at UNDP, and Ms. Sonia Mehzabeen, UNV Country Coordinator. The content included information on the governing framework and principles of recruitment, types of contracts, recruitment and application process, blended assessment, and quick tips and tricks.

The UN in Bangladesh recruits based on the principles of competition, objectivity, transparency, diversity, non-discrimination, and accountability. The selection process follows a visible and fair competitive process for all vacancies, regardless of post, contractual modality, or hiring unit. Screening will be conducted with professional rigor, with candidates measured against clearly articulated criteria, job skills, competencies, and corporate priorities. The recruitment and selection criteria and all phases of the recruitment processes will be transparent to staff and candidates to the fullest extent possible.



The UN is dedicated to fostering gender parity and embracing diversity. In its recruitment and selection processes, the organization refrains from discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or disability. Recruitment managers are held accountable for their selection recommendations and the methodologies employed in their decision-making, with ongoing assessments to ensure adherence to established recruitment procedures.

[The presentation can be found here.](#)

Role Model Panel Discussion

A Role Model Panel Discussion, moderated by Ms. Shamima Pervin, UNFPA, showcased inspiring career journeys of female staff from different UN agencies and at different contract levels. Each panelist shared personal stories that shed light on their unique experiences and challenges within the UN system:

Ms. Reshma Khan Zaman, for instance, spoke about what it is like to be the only female Operations Manager. She encouraged others to pursue careers within the UN, especially in traditionally male-dominated departments, emphasizing the importance of breaking gender barriers.

Ms. Priyanka Chakma shared her experience working directly with the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar, connecting it to her own experience of being a refugee. She further underlined the critical role the UN plays in humanitarian crises.

Ms. Nazma Ara Begum Poppy provided insights into her journey as a person with disabilities within the UN. She highlighted the support and accommodation she has received, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for all.

Lastly, Ms. Ujjaene Acharjee spoke about the support received to balance family obligations and work, praising the flexible policies that allow staff to achieve this balance effectively.

The panelists shared stories of resilience, emphasizing the importance of not giving up in the face of initial setbacks. For example, Ms. Ujjaene highlighted how she applied to multiple vacancies within the UN before securing a position, underscoring the determination and perseverance needed to succeed in a competitive job market.

The panelists collectively emphasized the significance of job descriptions, fair policies, personal contributions, and self-sufficiency in navigating their UN careers. They stressed the importance of improving understanding, raising awareness about issues of injustice and inequality, and employing a "learn fast, run slowly" strategy to create positive change within the organization.

The key takeaway from their insightful conversation is a resounding message of encouragement: don't give up, actively participate, take risks, and embrace your aspirations to succeed, no matter the challenges faced along the way.



Q&A session with HR Experts

Question-and-Answer session was held with members from the HR Working Group, moderated by Ms. Habiba Chowdhury, UNFPA and Ms. Moutushi Chowdhury, UN Women. This session provided an opportunity for the participants to ask HR related questions. The panelists from the HR Working Group were Mr. Md. Sajjadul Islam Chowdhury from UNDP, Ms. Selina Sultana from FAO, Ms. Sadia Hossain from WFP, and Ms. Nasrin Chowdhury from UNOPS.

The following are some examples on questions that were raised in the session:

1. What is the hiring procedure for fresh graduates?
2. How are youth being involved in UN organizations?
3. Would experience from the RMG sector be valued within the UN?
4. What does the UN do to work with people with disabilities and to accommodate staff with disabilities?
5. What is the UN doing to increase representation of transgender people or other underrepresented groups?
6. What is the timeline for a recruitment within the UN?

Closing remarks

Finally, **Ms. Gwyn Lewis, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh** in her closing remarks emphasized the commitment of the UN in Bangladesh to achieve gender parity. The UN in Bangladesh stands resolute in its determination to enhance the representation and leadership of women, aligning with the Government of Bangladesh's vision to achieve gender parity in the workforce. The UN remains dedicated to empowering and assisting the inspirational women leaders of Bangladesh by providing them with the necessary tools and opportunities for growth and success.

She further stated that it is essential to recognize that women bring unique perspectives and abilities to the table. Their leadership ensures that programs and policies are designed to meet the diverse needs of our societies, promoting inclusivity and equitable development. Moreover, gender equality, quality education, and good health, which are core Sustainable Development Goals, are intricately linked to women's leadership. When women take on leadership roles, they inspire and empower their communities, igniting a ripple effect that accelerates progress across various SDG sectors.

Advancing gender parity is the key to a more equitable and prosperous future for all. It unlocks innovative solutions and fosters the placement of more women in leadership positions. The UN is committed to providing women with more opportunities to assume these positions, enabling them to drive positive change at all levels and ultimately foster gender parity.

In closing, she emphasized that recalling their collective efforts in advancing gender parity will not only benefit women but also society as a whole. By working together and placing more women in positions of leadership, they are paving the way for a brighter and more inclusive future.



Career Fair

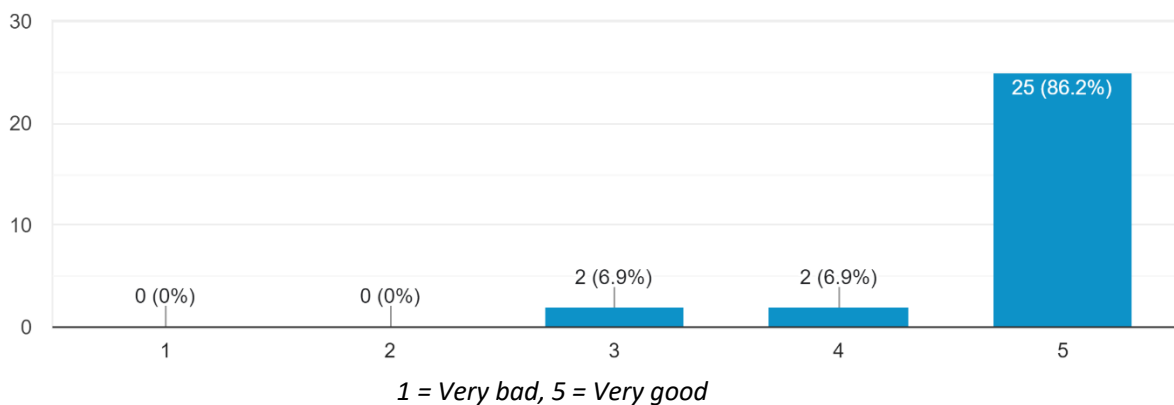
The event concluded with a career fair. 11 UN agencies, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNV, WFP, UN Women, UNDP, FAO, UNFPA, UNHCR, IOM, and ILO, set up booths for the attendees to converse with UN representatives, gain insight into their job, and pose targeted inquiries regarding possible career pathways.

Feedback from participants

A feedback survey was disseminated to all participants after the event. The feedback is summarized below.

Please rate your overall experience of the event.

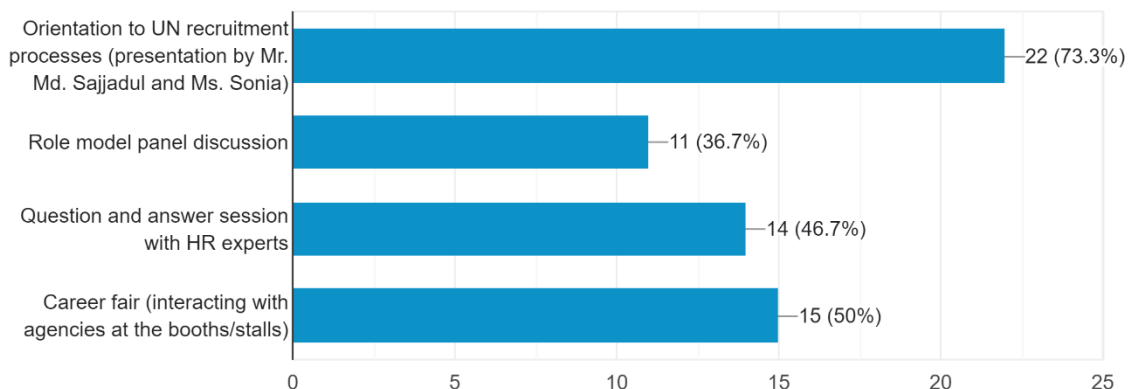
29 responses



In rating the overall experience of the event, 25 of the 29 individuals answered very good, 2 responded good, and 2 replied moderately good on a scale of very good to very bad.

What session did you find most useful?

30 responses



On the questions that session was most useful, 22 individuals out of 30 voted for orientation to UN recruitment, 11 voted for role models and discussion, 14 voted for question and answer session with HR experts, and 15 voted for career fair.



“Is there anything you would have wanted to hear more about or that was missing from the programme?”

- More information/practical examples of competency-based interviews, P11 forms, written tests, and creating a profile for the UN recruitment system.
 - The career fair could be more engaging rather than just an information center.
 - More information about specific UN agencies and their recruitment processes.
 - The presentation should include the qualifying criteria.
 - It would be better if there were recruitment opportunities from the fair based on the vacancies.
 - Know about the screening process, for example, how the shortlist is created from the big pool of applications and how to stand out in the crowd.
 - The CV of the participants could be collected and preserved for further suitable positions in the UN if she meets at least the minimum criteria.
 - Maybe arrange an online CV collection platform for internships or other small, temporary positions so that freshers or early career graduates can apply and be shortlisted easily.
 - Sharing the emails of the participants would be a good thing for networking.
 - Dividing tables into what UN organization participants might want to work with.
 - A photo booth would be cute for photo sessions.
 - Representation of transgender women and men.
- Presentation on UN organogram, facilities of UN staff, and challenges (and solutions) of UN work.

“Any other feedback?”

- Time management: The sessions should be extended, especially the Q&A sessions.
- Collecting questions for the Q&A session before the event via email could save time and make the event more efficient. For this, you can categorize the topics for questioning.
- The Q&A session could be more effective. Instead of letting the same people speak and the same issues be discussed, different challenges and opportunities should be explored. Most of the participants could not get the chance to share their questions, views, and opinions.
- Collect participants' CVs and preserve these in the HR team.
- It is better to be a little more circular, so that someone who is looking for a job can come to you.
- To ensure gender equality in the UN, management may think to add any indicator/criteria focusing on female candidates so that they can at least be long-listed.
- Provide a travel allowance to participants as many of them come from far distances.
- During the panel discussion, it could have been more informative about various job roles and the qualifications required to get in.
- It would be nice to get an e-certificate.
- There could be more focus on the role model session and have it after the HR panel so it would be easier to connect the process. Participants could also share their experience of navigating employment.



Positive feedback!

- “That was a complete package. I got inspired, especially by the role model session. The way all of the boss ladies inspired us, I really love that! Especially Pooja didi and Halima apu. Also, I will be grateful if I get notified again about this type of valuable inspiring program!”
- “It’s my pleasure to attend this session. The session is very helpful for me for preparing myself for a UN Job Interview.”
- “The event was also great for female networking, so it was definitely a positive experience. I would love to see the people I connected with again at similar upcoming UN events and build on these connections. Also, directly talking to the HR leads of each UN agency was very helpful.”
- “The arrangements were very nice; I was really enjoying lots thanks for your nice events which made me more encouraged. I know we all are happy regarding this event; we need more special programs. Thank you.”
- “It was an excellent opportunity to be selected among 6000+ applicants and connect with the core team members. I hope to join more career sessions like this.”
- “I am happy with this initiative of the UN. I think the UN should create more opportunities for people.”
- “Great initiative for enthusiastic people who want to join the UN.”

Participating Agencies

UN Women

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. UN Women in Bangladesh supports the government implementing their commitments to international normative standards on gender equality and women’s human rights. UN Women works with a range of stakeholders in Bangladesh including the government, civil society and women’s organizations, youth, UN agencies and donors, to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

About 170 countries and territories are served by UNDP, which aims to end poverty, lessen inequality and exclusion, and increase resilience so that nations can maintain their progress. As the UN's development organization, UNDP is vital to the success of nations in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

To assist in constructing the future, UNOPS offers infrastructure, procurement, and project management services. We respond to our partners' requirements and work to improve the effectiveness of peace and security, humanitarian, and development programs all over the world in order to promote the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals.



The United Nations Population Fund, (UNFPA)

The United Nations agency for sexual and reproductive health is known as UNFPA. Delivering a world where every pregnancy is desired, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is realized is our objective. We advocate for gender equality and give girls, women, and young people the tools they need to take charge of their bodies and their futures. To ensure that people have access to a variety of sexual and reproductive health treatments, we collaborate with partners in more than 150 countries. By 2030, we hope to have eliminated child marriage, female genital mutilation, gender-based violence, the unmet demand for family planning, and unnecessary maternal mortality.

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

A United Nations organization that promotes world peace and development through voluntarism is the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program. Volunteering is an effective way to get people involved in solving development problems and can change the pace and direction of development. By fostering more civic engagement and actively fostering chances for participation, volunteering benefits both society as a whole and the volunteers themselves.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR conducts international efforts to safeguard persons forced to leave conflict and persecution, as well as those refused citizenship. We spearhead international efforts to protect refugees, internally displaced people, and stateless individuals. Our aim is a society in which any person compelled to flee may create a better future for himself.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

FAO is a United Nations specialized agency that leads international efforts to end hunger and promote nutrition and food security. Its Latin motto, *fiat panis*, means "let there be bread." It was established on October 16, 1945. The FAO has 195 members, including 194 nations and the European Union. It operates in over 130 countries through regional and field offices across the world. It assists governments and development organizations in better coordinating their efforts to improve and develop agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and land and water resources. It also conducts research, assists projects with technical help, runs educational and training programs, and gathers agricultural output, production, and development data.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a leading intergovernmental organization that specializes in migration-related issues. Established in 1951, the IOM is dedicated to promoting safe, orderly, and humane migration worldwide. It provides a wide range of services and support to both governments and migrants, including assistance in managing migration challenges, improving migration policies, and aiding migrants in need, such as refugees and internally displaced individuals. With a global presence, the IOM plays a crucial role in addressing the complexities of international migration, fostering cooperation among nations, and advancing the well-being of migrants and their host communities.



International Labour Organization (ILO)

Since 1919, the ILO has been the only tripartite organization inside the United Nations, bringing together governments, employers, and employees from 187 Member States to set labor standards, create laws, and create initiatives that support fair pay for all women and men. The group has contributed to important historical moments such as the Great Depression, decolonization, the founding of Solidarno in Poland, and the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa. It is currently working to create an ethical and effective framework for just globalization.

World Food Programme (WFP)

WFP engages in a wide range of initiatives to end world hunger, including providing emergency life-saving aid and promoting resilient, sustainable livelihoods. With the ultimate objective of a world without hunger, our presence in more than 120 countries and territories encompasses a wide range of initiatives to save and transform lives. WFP is equipped with the knowledge, extensive reach, and operational size necessary to halt hunger in its tracks and pull people back from the brink of starvation. By enhancing social protection mechanisms like school meal programs, nutrition, livelihood resilience, and education, we also try to stop circumstances from turning into famine.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is the organization of the United Nations tasked with delivering humanitarian and developmental relief to children all over the world, was originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund in full. It is now officially known as the United Nations Children's Fund. With a presence in 192 countries and territories, the organization is one of the most well-known and well-known social welfare organizations in the world. The activities of UNICEF include giving vaccines and disease prevention, treating women and children who have HIV, strengthening maternal and childhood nutrition, enhancing sanitation, promoting education, and offering emergency aid in the event of disasters.

