



UNITED NATIONS
BANGLADESH



UN COUNTRY TEAM RESULTS REPORT BANGLADESH 2021





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UN Country Team Results Report Bangladesh 2021

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The year of 2021 was a significant one for Bangladesh. The country celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence and officially qualified for graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in 2026. The Government's 8th Five Year Plan was set in motion over the course of the year—laying the groundwork for a strong recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 and helping the country get back on track to advance the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its corresponding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the UN Country Team as one of its key partners.

This report provides a summary of the main results of the UN in Bangladesh over the past year, which were only made possible with the close support and collaboration of a range of partners and stakeholders. Throughout 2021, the UN worked hand-in-hand with the Government, civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and development partners including international financial institutions to support Bangladesh's recovery from COVID-19, and to accelerate the country's sustainable development journey. This has included continued support to the Government's COVID-19 health response along with key development priorities outlined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2017 – 2021). The UN also continued to provide humanitarian coordination support to strengthen the country's preparedness for, response to, and recovery from the impacts of climate-related disasters, and to respond to the Rohingya refugee crisis.

While the protracted COVID-19 outbreak and its multi-dimensional impacts continued to pose a series of obstacles to advancing on key development goals throughout the year, the pandemic also created new opportunities and entry points for strengthened partnerships—illustrating that sustainable progress can only be achieved through strong and sustained, collective action. As Bangladesh and the world continue to grapple with the impacts of COVID-19, it is important to look back and reflect on what we have achieved over the course of the year, together. In doing so, we not only see the primacy of partnerships in building back better from COVID-19, but in preserving peace and progressing development even during turbulent times. Toward this end, the UN in Bangladesh looks forward to continuing its support to the Government on its journey toward sustainable development, as outlined in the 2022-2026 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Bangladesh, which provides a pathway toward more inclusive and sustainable development for all.



Sudipto Mukerjee
Resident Coordinator ad interim
United Nations in Bangladesh

KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS OF THE UN IN BANGLADESH

The work of the UN 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 (CSOs)**, and a range of other stakeholders. In 2021 these partners included more than **50** bilateral member state and non-state donors, four IFIs, several multilateral organizations, and more than **300** NGOs. In addition, the UN also worked with workers organizations, employers' associations, think tanks, and academia.

Among the **key government counterparts** in 2021 were:

Cabinet Division
SDG Coordinator's Office
Prime Minister's Office
Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat

Ministry of Agriculture
Ministry of Chattogram Hill Tracts Affairs
Ministry of Commerce
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Food
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Ministry of Home Affairs
Ministry of Industries
Ministry of Labour & Employment
Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
Ministry of Planning
Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources

Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
Ministry of Religious Affairs
Ministry of Social Welfare
Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

Economic Relations Division
Finance Division
Financial Institutions Division
General Economic Division
Health Services Division
Internal Resource Division
Local Government Division
Medical Education and Family Welfare Division
Public Private Partnership Authority
Statistics and Informatics Division
Bangladesh Investment Development Authority
Bangladesh Bank
Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

Among the **key donors** in 2021 included:

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, and
Vietnam

Contributions were also received from multilateral organizations, private donors, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the SDG Joint Programme and the World Bank.

CHAPTER 1

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH AND THE REGIONAL CONTEXT



In early 2021, Bangladesh qualified to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category with a five-year transition period. Alongside this major development milestone and the country’s continued progress on socio-economic recovery from COVID-19, the emergence of the highly-contagious Delta and Omicron variants of the virus created a series of setbacks. As of February 2022, Bangladesh has recorded a total of **1.94 million** confirmed COVID-19 cases alongside more than 29,000 deaths. Despite this, the country has had success in countering the pandemic through rapidly increasing vaccination coverage; delivering approximately 185 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, with **78 million** people fully vaccinated and more than **3 million** people having received additional doses. The majority of these vaccines were provided by the WHO-led **COVAX** initiative.

Box 1: Social Safety Net Allocations



23 stimulus packages



For a total allocation of
USD 14.6 billion



Representing **4.2%** of
the GDP

In an effort to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, in 2021 the Government announced 23 stimulus packages exceeding USD14.6 billion¹ in total value (Box 1). These include measures aimed at strengthening an overburdened healthcare sector; expanding emergency humanitarian assistance programming, and buttressing the country’s overall economic-recovery. Against this backdrop, the country has experienced a steady growth in exports—facilitated in part by a renewed demand for ready-made garments abroad—alongside increased labour income and remittance flows,² while Bangladesh’s total export increased to USD 40.1 billion in 2020-21 as compared to 35.6 billion in 2019-2020 (Box 2). The national GDP growth rate along with budget and trade deficits for the 2020-2021 fiscal year are further outlined in Figure 1.

[1] This figure equates to 4.2% of the GDP (Bangladesh Economic Review 2021, Ministry of Finance).

[2] Despite worldwide COVID-19 surges continuing to disrupt global supply chains and impact labor migration, Bangladesh received USD 2.2 billion worth of remittances in 2021.

Box 2: 2021 Bangladeshi economy in numbers

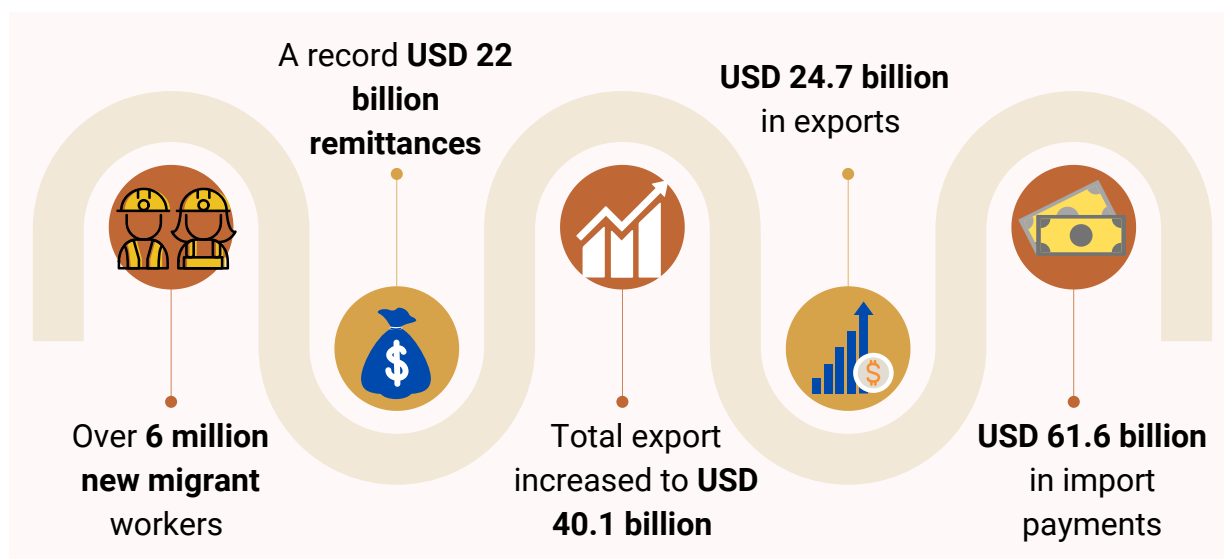
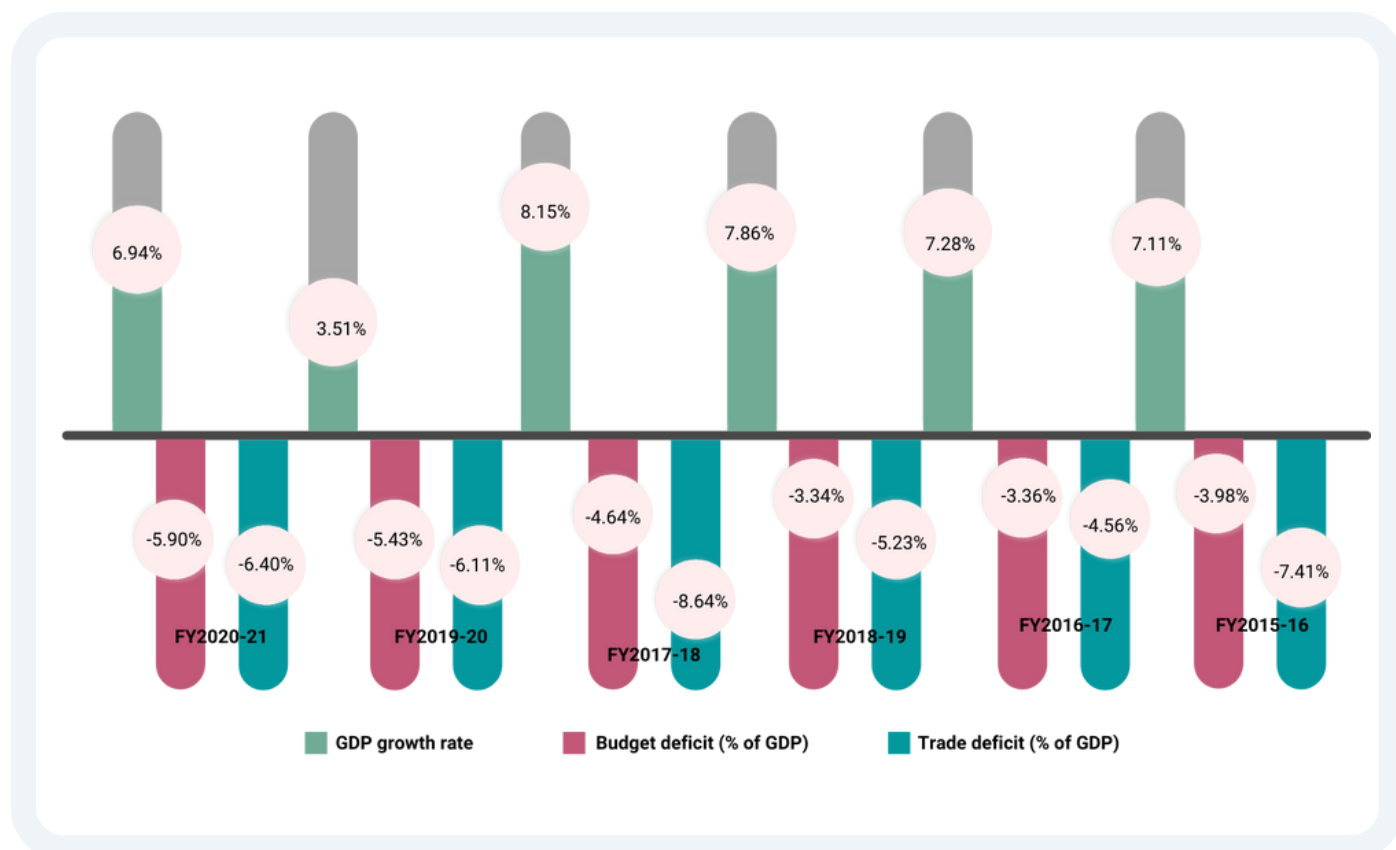


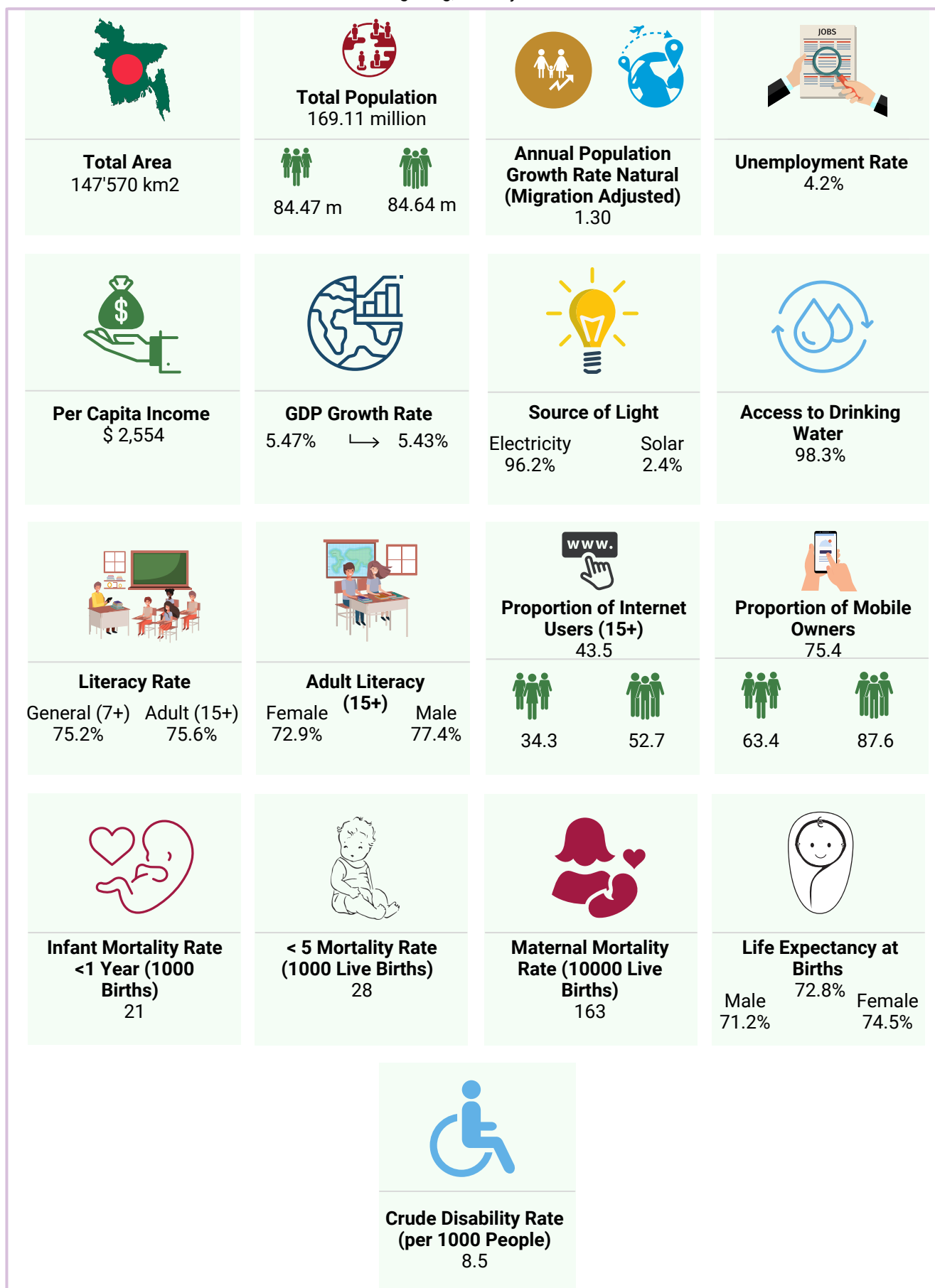
Figure 1. GDP growth, budget and trade deficits (2020 – 2021)



Another key achievement was noted in September 2021, with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network—a non-profit organization established to help advance the SDGs globally—bestowing Bangladesh with the SDG Progress Award in recognition of its continued progress toward achieving the SDGs. While the Government recognizes the need for reinvigorated commitment and financial support to help ensure the country stays on track to achieving the SDGs by 2030, development financing remains a major challenge.

Box 3: Key Statistics of Bangladesh

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Sample Vital Registration System, Quarterly Labour Force Survey, National Accounting Wing, Primary Health Care



CHAPTER 2

UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK



2.1. Executive Summary

With the pandemic entering its second year, in 2021 the UN in Bangladesh continued operating in “development-in-emergency” mode to help mitigate the short- and medium-term impacts of COVID-19. Despite facing a range of challenges, including a context increasingly characterized by scarce financing for sustainable development, over the course of the year the UN celebrated some major achievements, which have helped pave the way for a strong recovery from the pandemic and accelerated progress toward the SDGs.



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

The delivery of over 250 million COVID-19 vaccines placed Bangladesh among the top countries to have delivered the most vaccine doses globally

Some key development results include the re-opening of educational institutions following one of the longest closures in the world—helped by the sustained advocacy of the UN system; the delivery of over 250 million COVID-19 vaccines—which placed Bangladesh among the top countries to have delivered the most vaccine doses globally, and; the approval of a draft ‘Anti-Discrimination Act’ by the Cabinet of Bangladesh—which provides a critical legislative framework to help safeguard the right to equality and protect people from individual and structural discrimination.

The UN also delivered key results through its humanitarian coordination support to the Government of Bangladesh in 2021. This included notable achievements in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction, such as the development of a Multi-Year Humanitarian Preparedness and Response Strategy for Climate-Related Disasters, alongside the production of a synthesis report on enhancing Anticipatory Action in Bangladesh. In the context of the Rohingya Crisis, the UN continued to provide protection support to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, while working to support surrounding host communities through the provision of financial and livelihoods assistance to the most vulnerable households across Cox's Bazar District.

Against this backdrop, Chapter 2 presents the UN in Bangladesh's support and contribution to the country throughout 2021, achieved in close partnership with a range of government, civil society, and development partners. The main three areas in which the UN has achieved results are as follows, in line with the outcomes of the UN Development Assistance Framework Results (UNDAF) 2017 – 2021: (1) Equal rights, access and opportunities, (2) Sustainable and resilient environment, and (3) Inclusive and shared economic growth. This chapter also outlines the UN in Bangladesh's humanitarian coordination support on the Rohingya crisis and flood and cyclone preparedness and response; key partnerships for the 2030 Agenda; priorities for the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021-2025), and other relevant results and lessons learned over the course of 2021.



Photo: UN Women Bangladesh



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

2.2. Overview: Delivering UN Development Assistance Framework Results for Bangladesh

Outcome 1 – People: Equal Rights, Access and Opportunities

UN's Health Response to COVID-19

Throughout the year, COVID-19 has continued to place Bangladesh's healthcare system under serious strain—demanding and creating new opportunities to strengthen health services as part of the national COVID-19 response. Since the outbreak of the virus, WHO, WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM, and FAO have spearheaded the UN's support to the Government's health response to COVID-19. Notably, Bangladesh is the largest global recipient of vaccines from the WHO-led COVAX initiative to date. Over 187 million doses have been shipped into the country, allowing the Government to administer close to 129 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine throughout 2021 (Box 4).

Box 4: UN Support to the the Government's COVID-19 National Deployment and Vaccination Plan



The UN supported DGHS to develop the COVID-19 National Vaccination Deployment Plan & strengthen the capacities of **45,000** vaccinators/cold chain personnel & the functionality of cold chain systems.



Ultra-cold chain capacities were established for COVID-19 vaccines requiring storage at **minus 70 degrees Celsius**, while technical support was provided to the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign.



By 31 December 2021, **74,100,622** people had received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine & **52,365,847** individuals had been fully vaccinated.



At the end of December 2021, Bangladesh had received a total of **228.7 million** COVID-19 doses out of which **123.5 million (54%)** were from **COVAX**.



The UN provided Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) IPC training to 3,857 healthcare providers along with 938 cleaners and drivers.



The UN helped recruit 16 medical officers to mentor, monitor, and orient staff on maternal, newborn, child & adolescent health services, IPC, & COVID-19 case management.



The UN facilitated the deployment of 151 health service providers, 50 critical care specialists, 200 roving midwives, and 195 data entry operators.

Other key achievements from 2021 include continued support to the Bangladesh Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 (BPRP), of which an integral part is the inter-agency Community Support Team (CST)—a multi-sectoral platform led by the Directorate-General of Health Services (DGHS) in partnership with several UN agencies which supports critical public health services for low-income communities. In 2021, CST volunteers helped identify COVID-19-symptomatic and high-risk individuals and facilitated the delivery of home-based care for COVID-positive patients alongside hospital referrals, mask distribution, and vaccination registration. Working across Dhaka, volunteers visited over **1.8 million households**, distributing over **295,000 masks** and helping over **135,000 people** from vulnerable households register in the national vaccination system.



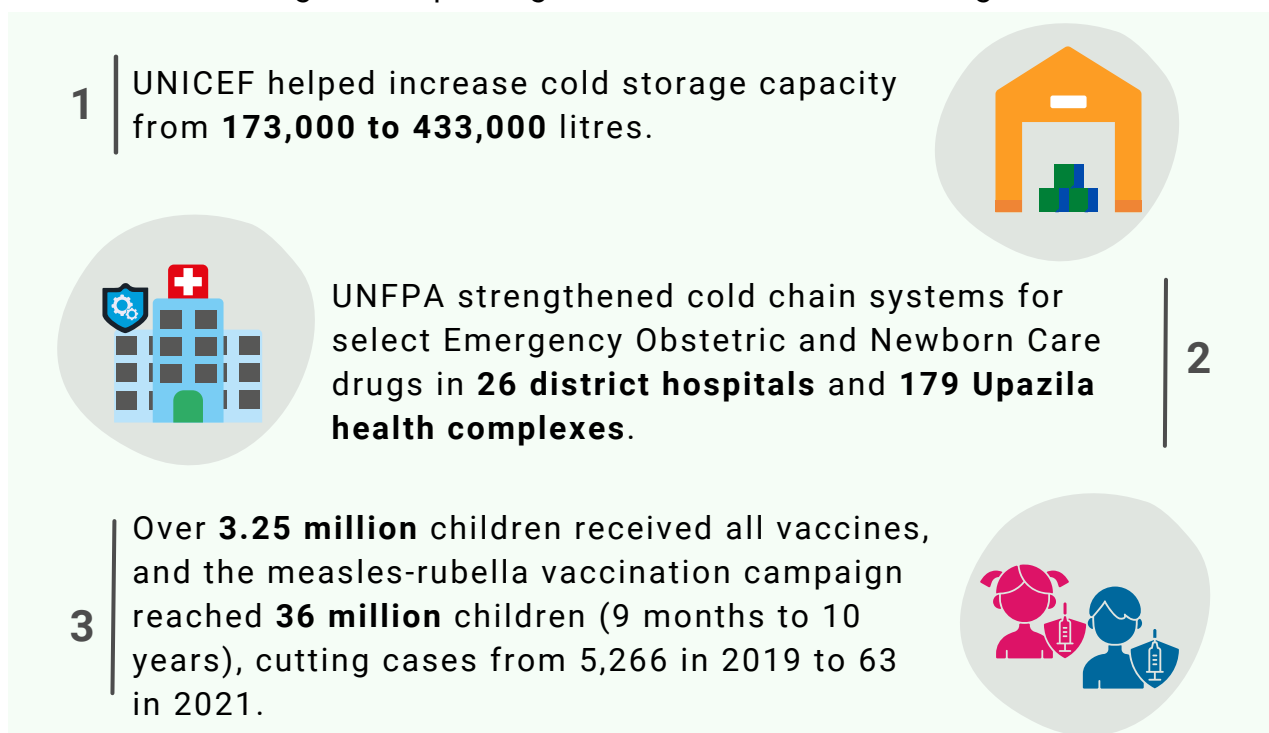
Photo: UNV Bangladesh

Another vital pillar of the national COVID-19 response focuses on Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) a critical tool for ensuring effective communication and engagement with communities, local partners and other stakeholders to help raise awareness and safeguard individuals from COVID-19. Among other 2021 achievements, the RCCE reached **48 million** people with COVID-19 prevention messages and helped train approximately **10,000** religious leaders and female teachers on Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC)—a key approach for improving health outcomes through targeted communication strategies aimed at positive behaviour change.

Essential Healthcare

Beyond the COVID-19 response, over the course of the year the UN has supported the Government in expanding routine immunization coverage (Figure 2), and promoting and improving family planning (FP) and sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) service provision for persons with disabilities. This has included supporting the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) to develop an action plan for family planning managers, which incorporates the rollout of a nationwide family planning campaign to prevent adolescent pregnancy. In 2021, this campaign delivered to **598,426 clients** different methods of contraceptives and provided support to **377,739 adolescents** through the provision of information and counselling services.

Figure 2: Expanding Routine Immunization Coverage



Furthermore, the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services in the maternal, new-born and child health system was integrated into 13 hospitals with UN support. As a result, by October 2021, **91,000** pregnant women/mothers had accessed HIV testing/counselling, while weekly mobile phone communication was introduced to monitor HIV-positive pregnant mothers' physical and mental health, to support lifesaving drug supplies, and provide PMTCT/COVID-19 counselling. Across the country, urban and field staff from approximately 151 drop-in centers were also supported in providing HIV and STI services for different key populations, including people living with HIV—with more than **90,000** people reached. Work was also conducted on educational campaigns, which included developing a training curriculum to sensitize law enforcers to HIV-prevention, ethical approaches, as well as harm reduction.

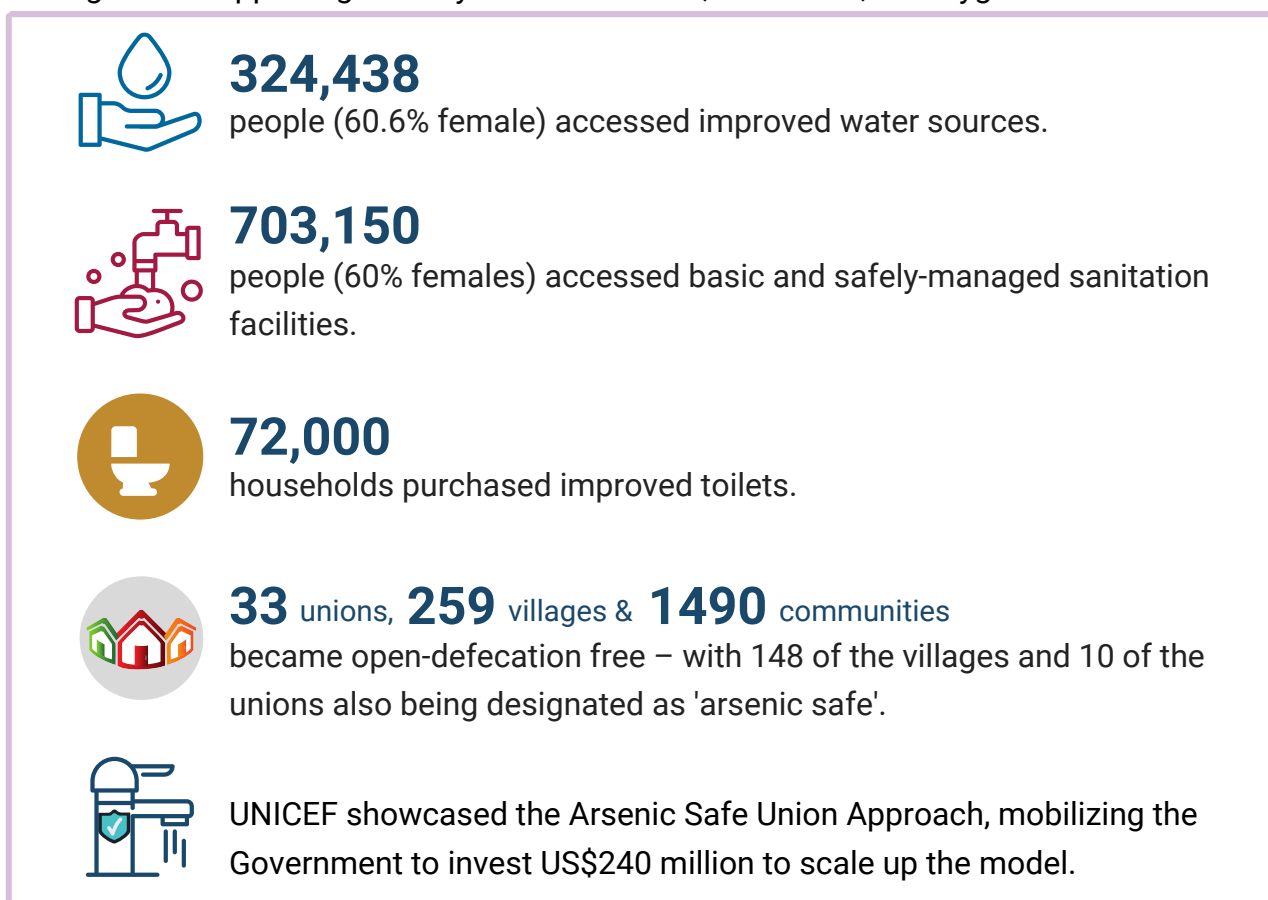


Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

With COVID-19 highlighting the critical importance of hand hygiene in containing infectious disease, the UN (led by UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, and WHO) provided extensive technical support to the Government in developing the COVID-19 WASH Strategy 2021. The UN also helped ensure that 4 million people (1.9 million females) were provided with an uninterrupted water supply through water point maintenance and disinfection. Moreover, 8,100 students (62% female) in primary education and 44,000 students (65% female) in secondary education across 128 schools were provided with access to safe drinking water, handwashing facilities, and gender-segregated, disability-friendly toilet blocks equipped for menstrual hygiene management. COVID-19 sanitation kits were distributed in 140 government primary schools and to 49,000 children at home in Ukhiya and Kutubdia sub-districts in Cox's Bazar. Further support provided by the UN in support of WASH can be seen in Figure 3.

8,100 students (62% female) in primary education and 44,000 students (65% female) in secondary education across 128 schools were provided with access to safe drinking water, handwashing facilities

Figure 3: Supporting delivery of critical Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene interventions



Food and Nutrition Security

Several UN agencies came together to provide multi-sectoral support to the Government on food and nutrition security. This included supporting local governments in 19 cities to prepare costed Multi-Sectoral Nutritional Action Plans to help guide decision-making, which led 16 cities to increase their budget allocation for poverty reduction. The UN provided **1,853,347 people** with food assistance, which included 18,351 metric tonnes of food and USD 145 million cash. With the UN's technical assistance the government reached another 10.9 million people with food assistance and delivered micronutrient fortified biscuits to 2.9 million pre-primary and primary school children in 94 sub-districts. A further 45,000 at-risk people in Dhaka were provided with monthly, cash-based food assistance to help prevent hunger and malnutrition and supported urban gardening initiatives in Dhaka. ³ The UN provided technical assistance to the Government to scale up the distribution of fortified rice, reaching 8 million people under the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and the Food Friendly Programme (FFP) of the Government. The UN also supported the expansion of nutrition services to levels that surpassed its 2021 target.



Photo: IFAD Bangladesh

Among other key milestones, nutrition counselling reached 1,809,017 pregnant women attending antenatal care, while a nation-wide campaign aimed at increasing children's Vitamin A levels reached 21,987,133 people.

^[3] <https://www.wfp.org/countries/bangladesh>

Counselling on infant and young child feeding was delivered to **3,757,771** caregivers of children aged 0–23 months. ⁴ The UN provided further support to the Government in preparing for a Nutrition for Growth Summit in December 2021, and worked to build strong and inclusive producer organizations (POs) by helping smallholder farmers establish productive alliances alongside POs, exporters, processors, traders, and their associations. ⁵

The UN has also worked to support the Government in strengthening sustainable food systems across the country. As part of these efforts, the UN facilitated a Government and private sector representative visit to the the Netherlands through the Hand-in-Hand initiative, which brings together countries with high agricultural potential and developed countries that have efficient and developed agricultural sectors. Through the Hand-in-Hand initiative, the UN has continued to support the Ministry of Agriculture to better understand market priorities for the coming years and to formulate investment strategies that will help support the agriculture sector.



Photo: IFAD Bangladesh



[4] 72% of health/nutrition workers trained in infant and young child feeding (IYCF) were counseled by UNICEF.

[5] In 2021, FAO-Supported POs have sold more than half a million litres of milk to processors, 216 metric tonnes of vegetables, 1085 metric tonnes of cereal, 1500 metric tonnes of potatoes and other crops to large traders.

Education

Protracted school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic affected approximately 37 million children⁶ – contributing to a noticeable increase in child marriage and school dropout rates. The UN continued to provide support to the Government to help strengthen remote learning during school closures, reaching 30 million pre-primary to secondary students. Sustained UN advocacy over the course of the year also contributed to the reopening of schools for students at every level except pre-primary to attend in-person classes at least one day per week. To ensure re-opening was safe for students and teachers alike, the UN also worked to develop school reopening guidelines and procured hygiene supplies for 1.3 million children in 7,100 primary schools.



Photo: WFP Bangladesh

The UN also supported the development of a primary-level, integrated Education Management Information System (EMIS), which is now ready for trial. At the secondary level, a quick monitoring system was introduced to monitor school reopening using real-time data. In September 2021, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the revised National Curriculum Framework (NCF), which promises to create momentum for qualitative changes in teaching-learning processes and contribute to children's improved learning outcomes. The UN provided support to development and rollout of the NCF included detailing the subject-based curriculum and developing teaching-learning strategies, materials and assessment for piloting from 2022; and supporting the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education to design innovative pedagogy and formative assessment. School- and classroom-based assessment was piloted in 100 primary schools.

[6] <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/press-releases/future-37-million-children-bangladesh-risk-their-education-severely-affected-covid>



Photo: WFP Bangladesh

Over 3.5 million learners across Bangladesh also connected to ‘Kishore Batayan Konnect’—an online-based educational platform that promotes life skills, edutainment, career and counselling services for adolescents and the provision of an accelerated primary education programme for 4,300 of the most marginalized out-of-school children. The UN also continued to support the radio-based learning programme ‘Ghore Boshe Shikhi’, which reached 6.1 million learners (52.5% female) in rural and remote areas throughout 2021, and helped translate early-learning story books in Bangla into five ethnic minority languages as part of the global initiative ‘Translate a Story Campaign’.

In partnership with relevant Government ministries, the BBS, and a2i, a range of key documents were also developed to help strengthen the education sector, including the Bangladesh Education Sector Plan, the Blended Education Framework, an E-9 Digital Learning and the Skills for all Initiative Road Map, and the National Academy for Education Management Teacher Training Curriculum.



Good Governance and Justice

Over the course of the year, the UN helped strengthen participatory, inclusive governance and justice systems, with a particular focus on ensuring more equitable, non-discriminatory, gender-responsive approaches. Toward this end, in 2021 the UN continued to implement a citizen-centric approach to deliver uninterrupted, efficient, and cost-effective public services to ensure citizen satisfaction, inclusion, and diversity. Digital systems designed at the initial stage and redesigned at the implementation stage were based on citizens’ feedback—reaching **13.6 million citizens 666.5 million** times in 2021. To strengthen good governance at the local level, the UN supported the introduction of public hearings as a social accountability tool in several Upazilas and Union Parishads across the country, with efforts to promote social inclusion by empowering women and those most marginalized in different communities. Of the 443 issues raised by local citizens in several open public hearings, 29% were resolved immediately. Throughout 2021, Village Courts were also promoted as forums for alternate dispute resolution mechanisms to facilitate access to justice and ease pressure on the formal courts.

The UN more broadly supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and capacitated CSOs to localize the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

The UN also provided civil society, interest groups, government agencies, and development partners with improved access to data on violence and social tensions in Bangladesh, establishing a critical evidence base to enable more informed decision-making in support of peace, tolerance, and social cohesion. As part of these efforts, the Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO)—an open-source database that tracks violent incidents across the country—has accumulated **111,618 validated data points** over the past 96 months, making BPO the most extensive database on political, ethnic, communal, criminal, gender-based, as well as extremist violence in Bangladesh. In support of preventing violent extremism, sustaining peace, and promoting a gender-responsive approach to social cohesion, the UN also supported a total of 304 female students through Women Peace Cafés (WPC) in four national- and regional-level universities to improve understanding of the relationship between gender and violent extremism. The WPC members further helped strengthen community resilience by providing 400 vulnerable community women from 21 districts with COVID-19 resilience toolkits and awareness-raising messaging.

The UN supported the Government in implementing the Global Action Against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants Migrants-Bangladesh ([GLO.ACT-Bangladesh](#)), while facilitating evidence generation on to monitor, evaluate, and enhance the understanding of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants; building the capacity and knowledge of criminal justice practitioners to combat trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and assisting and protecting victims as well as vulnerable migrants, and; promoting cooperation and information exchange with law enforcement on the identification, investigation and prosecution of offences related to trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. In 2021, under the framework of GLO.ACT-Bangladesh, the UN trained 116 (42 Female and 74 male) government officials including judges, prosecutors, investigating officers, service providers to victims of human trafficking etc.





Photo: UNFPA Bangladesh

Ending Child Marriage

In 2021, the UN continued to support the Government in finalizing the 2018 National Action Plan to End Child Marriage. This included the provision of technical and financial support for interventions in high-priority districts across the country, as well as communication and behavioral change. As part of the #Raisethebeat4ECM campaign, public service announcements reached 164 million people and engaged 87 million people to help foster public resistance to child marriage. In addition, the UN provided technical support to the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat to produce an analysis of public budget allocation for implementation of the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage, and a policy paper on enhancing access of adolescent girls to economic skills development training programmes.

Gender-Based Violence

Throughout the year, the UN supported GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response interventions, reaching **361,667 women, girls and boys (78% female)**, while 582,161 beneficiaries (46% female) were reached through community-based mental health and psychosocial support. In 2021, a multi-sectoral referral mechanism was established to provide justice and legal aid, health, protection and social services to survivors in four targeted districts (Jamalpur, Bogura, Patuakhali and Cox's Bazar), and a total of **29,160** women and girls received multi-sectoral GBV services (**3,474** referral services and **25,686** GBV-related information). In addition, **37,639** women and girls received support from Union Health and Family Welfare Centres, and women friendly spaces, which included case management, referral, psycho-social support, and health sector responses to GBV.

582,161 beneficiaries (46% female) were reached through community-based mental health and psychosocial support.

The UN also supported the Bangladesh Police provide GBV services to women and girls across the country, with a total of 17,189 women and girls receiving services from 33 Women Help Desks (WHD) at police stations in Dhaka, Patuakhali, Jamalpur, Cox's Bazar, and Bogura. Bangladesh Police is also training police officials of the women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities service desks on women-friendly police services to provide quality services to GBV survivors in police stations across the country. A total of 458 police officials were trained in 2021.



Photo: UN Women Bangladesh

In 2021, six sub-national GBV working groups in six disaster-prone districts were jointly coordinated by the UN, alongside capacity building on related thematic issues such as Child Protection. SRH and GBV issues were also elevated as key issues in the context of climate and the environment; integrated into the national Humanitarian-Development Collaboration for Climate-Related Disasters in Bangladesh (2021-2025) strategy which combines inter-agency tools to strengthen preparedness and response. The UN also helped 12,248 women and girls access services from eight Women Friendly Spaces (WFS) established in four disaster-prone districts (Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Khulna and Satkhira).



Outcome 2 – Planet: Sustainable and Resilient Environment

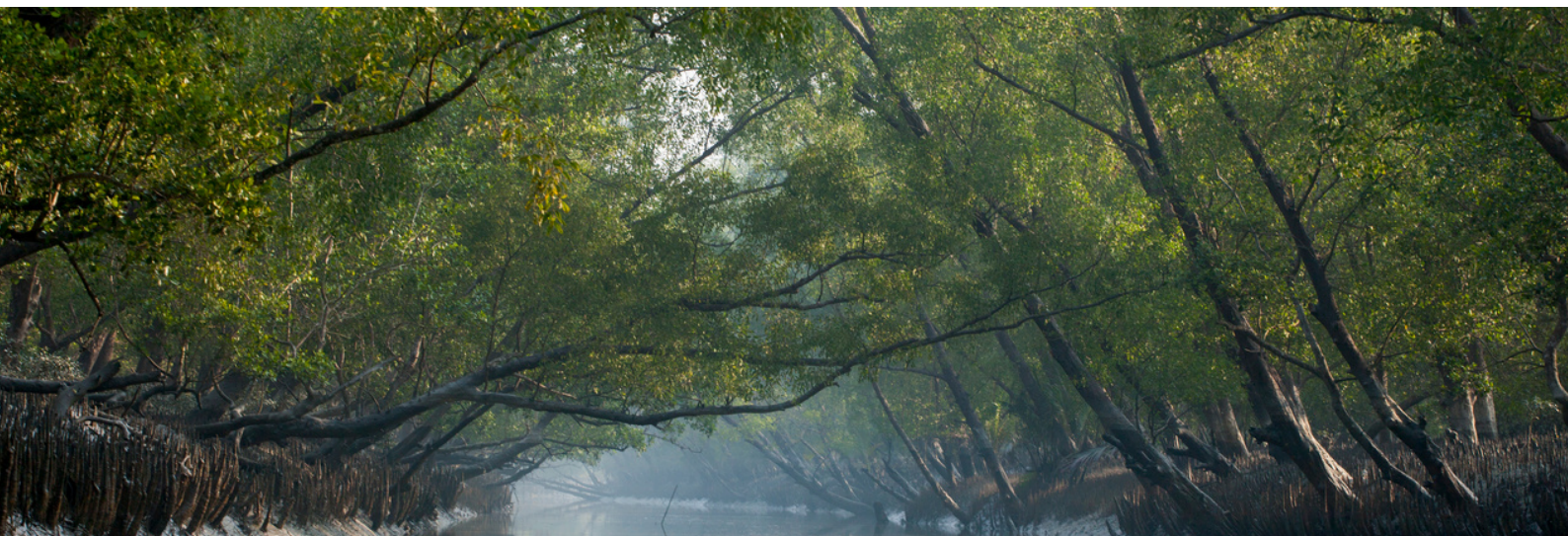


Photo: UNRCO Bangladesh

Climate Change and the Environment

In 2021, the UN continued to support the Government in strengthening natural resource management and environmental protection. Key results include 42 Village Common Forests, covering **2,197 hectares of land**, and work with **31,100 forest-dependent people** to develop more climate-resilient livelihoods that integrate ecosystem-based solutions. UN efforts to strengthen economic and environmental resilience in 20 micro-watershed areas reached **106** communities and **24,892** of the most vulnerable people living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region. To improve access to potable water in the region, the UN supported the installation of 13 solar pumps with 34.14 KW solar energy to help **1,668** households in Rangamati meet their energy needs.

To help reduce the health risks of people working in the power sector and support the Government in fulfilling its commitments to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the UN supported the Department of Environment (DoE) in drafting a rule book and guidelines for the identification and management of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs⁷), while providing training to 259 officers from 7 power sector entities alongside government officers on sampling, screening, and safe handling of harmful industrial products. The UN also supported the development of a gender-sensitive policy to guide the **Solid Waste Management (SWM)** sector in its handling of hazardous waste. With the support of the UN, the Local Government Engineering Department (LEGD) developed a strong gender marker for Gender Responsive Resilient Infrastructure. Jointly led by LGED and the Department for Women's Affairs (DWA), 26 officials were trained on the marker. Additionally, the UN also helped strengthen Government capacities to integrate gender equality into climate action by training 102 officials and practitioners on gender responsive climate change adaptation and 245

[7] PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls are POPs, and highly toxic industrial compounds. They pose serious health risks to fetuses, babies and children, who may suffer developmental and neurological problems from prolonged or repeated exposure to small amounts of PCBs. These chemicals are harmful to adults as well.

officials on the collection and use of sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data for disaster, climate, and environmental risks. At the sub-national level, a basic SWM system was established in 13 market areas of five Upazilas and one Municipality of Teknaf in Cox's Bazar District, resulting in 71% of the waste generated being collected and properly disposed of, and 12% used to make organic compost. At the same time, the Forestry Department **replanted 2,500 hectares of degraded forestland** outside of the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar District, alongside 270 hectares of land inside the camps. Relatedly, the UN sustained the provision of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to all refugee households, which reduced deforestation and prevented the extraction of over 533,000 tonnes of firewood from the forest areas in Cox's Bazar District, equivalent to 655,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. The capacities of local disaster management committees (more than 700 members) and **disaster management structures in Cox's Bazar** were also reinforced through support from the UN, including its work with the Forestry Department to develop and pilot a landslide early warning system, that incorporates extensive field inventory data. The UN also provided Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) training to 128 health service providers in 16 disaster-prone districts to help communities better prepare and coordinate emergency responses, while 156 healthcare providers received training on locally-led Anticipatory Action. A further 331,595 people (55% women) benefited from a USD 1.7 millions investment in 188 climate adaptive and resilient infrastructure schemes in seven of the most climate vulnerable districts. The creative economy sector was also reinforced through the conduct of a Covid-19 Impact Study on cultural and creative industries.

In the run up to COP26 in Glasgow in November, the UN increased its support and advocacy to help improve the Government's ambitions regarding its nationally determined voluntary and conditional contributions to phase out greenhouse gas emissions, while delivering public advocacy campaigns on climate and environmental action, including social media campaigns targeting the #COP26, #WasteInMyBag, #BattleforGreen campaigns, which were highly successful in raising awareness.

The UN worked to strengthen and implement more coherent policies, plans, regulations and investments to support the poverty-environment objectives of the Poverty-Environment Action for Sustainable Development Goals (PEA). This involves both public and private sector engagement, with 2021 seeing the formulation of: the 2020/21 Voluntary National Review, the Leave No One Behind report, a revised SDGs Progress Report, an assessment on the feasibility of issuing blue bonds, the Second National Multidimensional Poverty Index report, and a report on Private Sectors contribution to the SDGs. The UN also assisted with the design and testing of different climate-risk insurance products, covering a total of 12,500 individuals.



Outcome 3 – Prosperity: Inclusive and Shared Economic Growth

Social Protection

Over the course of 2021, the UN continued to support the Government to strengthen social protection. This included support to GED to establish an SDG dashboard with MPI/Child Multidimensional Poverty Index (CMPI), leading to a commitment from the Government to use these data to monitor public expenditure for children. Through direct technical assistance to the Cabinet Division, the UN also supported the establishment of a Child Sensitive Social Protection Policy Guidance Unit to help address the specific patterns of children's poverty and vulnerability, uphold the rights of children, and recognize the long-term benefits of investing in children for sustainable development. The UN also supported the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in conducting the first time-use survey in Bangladesh on time spent by men and women on paid and unpaid work.

The UN provided substantial support to several ongoing policy and legal reform initiatives which included contributing to the implementation of the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) 2022-2026, amendments to labour laws, and advocacy for gender responsive planning and budgeting towards increased investment for most disadvantaged women. With a focus on the most vulnerable groups, the UN led joint policy advocacy initiatives to support access to quality basic social services and contributed to social policy and legislative reforms for the protection of the tea garden communities (Annex on joint programmes for details).

Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

Over the course of 2021 the UN provided a range of support to the urban poor, including interventions aimed at increasing family income, preventing early and forced marriages, improving nutrition, sustaining education, teaching vocational skills, and improving the overall living conditions of individuals and families. Through this support, 243,165 members of urban, low-income settlements across 19 towns gained access to socio-economic grants and infrastructure facilities. Using its public asset model, the UN also supported the participation of 3,564 rural women in income-generating activities, and provided livelihood support to 24,892 marginalized people—53% of whom are women from ethnic minority communities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts—through interventions aimed at improving individual's agricultural skills, knowledge, and access to natural resources.



Photo: ILO Bangladesh



Photo: IFAD Bangladesh

For employment promotion, support was provided to harmonize the qualifications received in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes with the Bangladesh National Qualification Framework (BNQF) contributing to skills recognition and career progression for those left out from higher education tracks. This included additional trainings of TVET teachers and assessors, and the development of qualification packages for high-skilled workers. In light of the challenges of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts were made to digitalize TVET courses, with the development of an e-Campus, e-materials, and human resources capacities; 45 teachers were trained as master trainers and 732 TVET officials received training on e-learning and e-content with 176 e-learning materials (video lectures and supplementary materials) developed to this end.

To support the cottage, small, and medium entrepreneurs (CMSMEs), the UN adopted a multidimensional approach to enhance the capacity of 2,194 CMSMEs to facilitate skills development, with 2,985 CMSMEs onboarded on ekShop—a digital marketplace developed by UNDP. The UN continued to support female-headed medium-to-small by providing training on how to use digital platforms to sell products and procure raw materials, access finance, and scale up businesses. Through 1,170 adolescent clubs, the UN also worked to empower 118,802 adolescent girls and boys with life skills. Under the Skills4Girls initiative, dedicated efforts continued to be made to reach marginalized out-of-school adolescent girls with trades, scaling up the Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) for diverse groups of out-of-school adolescents.



Women's Economic Empowerment

Over the course of the year, the UN worked to facilitate women's access to decent employment, ensure a discrimination-free environment in public workplace, develop adaptive livelihoods, create access to financial services for sustainable graduation from the extreme poverty of women beneficiaries, and develop local government capacities to implement pro-poor projects. UN interventions helped promote a gender-balanced, peaceful, and economically-inclusive society in Bangladesh, with approximately **97% of 32,000 women** who received business grants reported to be successfully running small businesses at the year's end. Approximately 80% of the primary group members also engaged in savings and credit programmes that will help facilitate their financial self-reliance.



Photo: ILO Bangladesh



Photo: UN Women Bangladesh

The UN provided further support to 3,108 female returnee migrants by providing reintegration packages in the form of cash grants, psychosocial support, skills training and entrepreneurship support services. 1875 people further received entrepreneurship development training and 1289 returnee migrants and their family members received skills training. Support was also provided to help individual's gain access to the Government's Socio-Economic Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers Support Programme, which includes gender-responsive community-based interventions (CBIs) such as cash grants and cash-for-work initiatives to help create alternative livelihood opportunities. The UN is also supporting the development of a clearer reintegration policy with dedicated support to returning female migrant workers.

Within the Women's Empowerment for Inclusive Growth (WING) Project, catalytic investments amounting to USD \$165,761 were made in four women-led cooperative and social enterprises, unlocking USD \$1,261,201 in the form of developer's equity, bank loans and local government grants, creating 5,885 new jobs for women. 5,500 storage facilities were also provided for female farmers to sell their agricultural products. Further support was provided in partnership with Brac Bank to launch Bangladesh's first SME Bondhu: a one stop-solution to digitize women-owned informal businesses with the platform facilitating access to inventory management, payment gateway, mobile app, and integrated shipping/logistics solutions. About 100,000 small and micro Businesses (SMBs), 25% of which are women led, were provided with digital financial literacy training. (Annex on joint project for details.)



2.3. Joint Humanitarian Response Efforts

Humanitarian Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Under the leadership of the Government, the humanitarian community continued providing protection to and seeking solutions for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, with the ultimate goal of their safe, sustainable and voluntary return to Myanmar, alongside providing support to vulnerable households in the host community.



Photo: UNHCR Bangladesh

As of the end of 2021, approximately 918,841 Rohingya refugees⁸ were registered in Bangladesh, residing in thirty-three⁹ camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas¹⁰ of Cox's Bazar District, and on the island of Bhasan Char in the Bay of Bengal. Since 2017, when the majority of Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh, the humanitarian operation has transitioned from providing emergency services designed to protect the lives of newly arriving refugees, to a more holistic, sustainable and coherent response to all Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh pending a viable, durable solution to their situation in Myanmar.

The 2021 Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis¹¹ was a prioritised appeal of USD 943 million for 134 partners, including 9 UN agencies, 69 Bangladeshi NGOs, and 56 international NGOs. Donors generously provided significant resources, with 69% of the requested funding (USD 653 million) received as of the end of the year. Four strategic objectives guided the humanitarian response:

[8] Government of Bangladesh-UNHCR Registration Figures, as of 31 December 2021.

[9] In 2021, the Government of Bangladesh closed Camp 23 / Shamlapur, bringing the total number of Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to thirty-three.

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

[11] <https://reporting.unhcr.org/2021JRP>



Photo: UNHCR Bangladesh

(1) strengthen the protection of Rohingya refugee women, men, girls and boys; (2) deliver life-saving assistance to populations in need; (3) foster the well-being of Bangladeshi host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas; and (4) work towards the sustainable repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.

As of December 2021, the Government of Bangladesh had relocated some 18,000 Rohingya refugees on a voluntary basis from the camps in Cox's Bazar to the island of Bhasan Char. Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR (on behalf of the UN) in October 2021 to establish a common protection and policy framework for the Rohingya humanitarian response on the island, critical investments will be made to support and complement the work of the Government and to provide equitable assistance to all refugees, including those who have voluntarily relocated to Bhasan Char. In close coordination with the Government, the humanitarian response continued to scale up targeted support to the Bangladeshi communities that generously host Rohingya refugees, seeking to address the most urgent evidence-based needs for **472,000 Bangladeshis**, including in the areas of health, livelihoods, nutrition, education, and case management services to support the most vulnerable, while seeking to promote harmonious relations between refugee and host communities.



The COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges throughout the year, yet the Government, with the support of the humanitarian community, continued delivering an effective response that has prevented loss of life¹² and extended critical support to Rohingya refugees. Twelve Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) and a comprehensive COVID-19 response strategy continued to withstand the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. Beginning in August 2021, Bangladesh launched its COVID-19 vaccination for Rohingya refugees as part of its national plan. By December 2021, more than 277,000 refugees had received one or both doses of the vaccine. In line with strict national COVID-19 lockdowns, humanitarian activities were delivered in the camps in 2021 at significantly reduced levels. While Rohingya refugees and host community volunteers formed the backbone of the response and delivered the most critical services during the COVID-19 lockdowns, the decrease in humanitarian presence for extended periods contributed to greater challenges in addressing protection needs in the camps.



Photo: UNHCR Bangladesh

Despite these challenges, significant achievements were made across sectors. Throughout the year, access to essential health services were maintained in 130 facilities. A three-year Strategy on Family Planning¹³ established a holistic framework for meeting the sexual and reproductive needs of women and girls in 2021-2023, and 177,000 women of reproductive age received access to contraceptive methods – 25% above the annual target. Rohingya and Bangladeshi teachers and instructors were trained and capacitated to provide quality education to Rohingya children and youth, and the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot was launched in 24 learning centres with 810 learners (including 137 girls), with plans for the scale-up under way. To improve accountability to affected populations, a Common Feedback Platform was established and adopted by eight partners, to be rolled out as a mechanism for harmonized complaints, feedback, and response, while ensuring data protection and improving the timeliness of responses.

[12] As of 31 December 2021, Bangladesh had reported 1,583,626 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 21,062 of which had been identified in Cox's Bazar District, including 3,306 Rohingya refugees. 34 deaths among Rohingya refugees are recorded as a result of COVID-19.

[13] The Strategy on Family Planning for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis 2021-2023 was developed by the Health Sector Sexual and Reproductive Health Working Group and approved by the Directorate General of Family Planning (DDFP) and the RRRC's Office.

Disaster Preparedness and Response

Throughout 2021, the UN in Bangladesh continued to lead in supporting the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT)—a coordination platform that works to strengthen the preparedness and collective response of the Government, and national and international actors to disasters in Bangladesh. With support from The Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the Government of the United Kingdom, and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the HCTT plays a crucial role in coordinating inter-agency readiness to respond to climate-related disasters, earthquakes, and fires, with a view to strengthen collective anticipatory action. In 2021, 331,595 people (55% women) benefited from a USD 1.7 million investment in 188 climate adaptive and resilient infrastructure schemes in seven of the most climate-vulnerable districts.

In 2021 the HCTT adopted a multi-year approach to better integrate humanitarian preparedness and response to development, culminating in the formulation of the HCTT Nexus Strategy for Climate-related Disasters 2021-2025¹⁴. In consultation with Government, the strategy was developed to support the National Plan for Disaster Management 2021-25¹⁵, and complement the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 in key relevant areas. Over the course of the year, the HCTT achieved several milestones across four key areas: 1) Risk and Impact Analysis, 2) Priority Preparedness Action, 3) Partnership and Institutional Capacity Building, and 4) Humanitarian Action Planning (box 6 below).

Complementing these efforts, the UN, in accordance with the National Plan for Disaster Management worked to produce the INFORM Index based on indicators of risk, exposure and vulnerability for all Districts and Upazilas of Bangladesh. The main objective of this sub-national level INFORM Index is to develop a shared analysis of risk and highlight disaster risk-prone areas to help mobilize resources (figure 4 & 5 below). The Index also helps increase understanding of underlying risk drivers at the sub-national level that can help the humanitarian community compare levels of risk across a District and Upazila and make evidence-based decisions for action accordingly.¹⁶



[14] <https://bangladesh.un.org/index.php/en/142611-hctt-nexus-strategy-2021-2025-humanitarian-development-collaboration-climate-related>

[15] https://modmr.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/modmr.portal.gov.bd/page/a7c2b9e1_6c9d_4ecf_bb53_ec74653e6d05/NPDM2021-25%20DraftVer5_23032020.pdf

[16] The Index is a largely composite indicator-based risk index which has incorporated gender and inclusion considerations (i.e. persons with disability, ethnic population)

Risk and Impact Analysis

- Produced a Financial Flow Analysis 2014-2020 for Climate-Related Disasters, together with START Fund Bangladesh
- Conducted a Multi-Hazard Risk Analysis of Climate-Related Disasters in Bangladesh, together with START Fund Bangladesh
- Supported the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) pilot initiative to rollout the Global Risk Assessment Framework (GRAF) to improve monitoring and reporting on the Sendai Framework.
- Conducted a joint needs assessment

Partnership and Institutional Capacity

- Created an area-based approach to develop Disaster Risk Management capacities and facilitate implementation of the Standing Order on Disaster (SoD)
- Supported private sector engagement in humanitarian action through the ECHO-funded Strengthening Urban Public-Private Programming for Earthquake Resilience (SUPER) project.

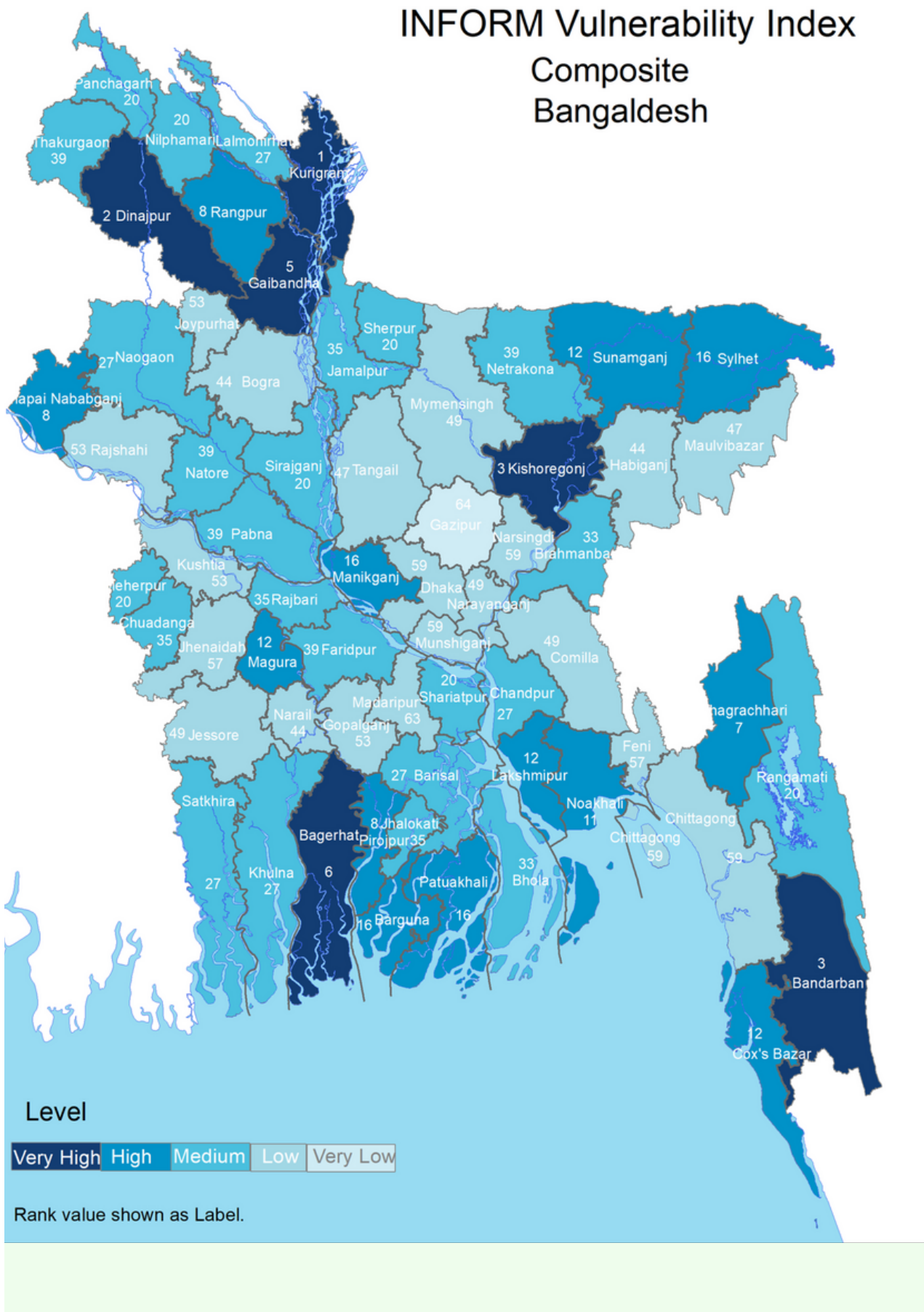
Priority Preparedness Action

- Developed 2nd phase piloting of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Anticipatory Action for the Monsoon Flood Response 2021-22 with WFP, UNICEF, FAO and UNFPA and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society.
- Produced a synthesis report on Anticipatory Humanitarian Action in Bangladesh.
- Helped develop an Anticipatory Action Working Group Plan & two anticipatory action projects, funded by ECHO HIP 2020.
- Secured funding for humanitarian coordination to improve preparedness for anticipatory action and early response.

Humanitarian Action Planning

- Developed HCTT Nexus Strategy 2021-2025.
- Organized HCTT special meeting to discuss and agree on priority actions for 2021-2025.

Figure 5: INFORM Vulnerability Index Composite Bangladesh



2.4. UNSDCF priorities and outcomes



Photo: UNRCO Bangladesh

In 2021, the Government of Bangladesh and the UN co-signed the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for 2022-2026. The new UNSDCF reflects the UN Development System's collective response to support national priorities as articulated in the 8th Five-Year Plan, with a view to supporting national progress on sustainable development and the country's sustainable graduation from the LDC category in 2026.

In a country still grappling with the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 against the backdrop of a changing development finance landscape due to its anticipated graduation, the new UNSDCF places emphasis on increasing development effectiveness through delivering on five interrelated, mutually reinforcing and multi-sectoral Strategic Priorities.



Photo: UNRCO & IFAD Bangladesh

Through these Strategic Priorities, the UN will support the Government and the people of Bangladesh to accelerate evidence-informed approaches to inclusive, equitable, and sustainable human, social, economic, and environmental development (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Strategic Priorities of UNSDCF



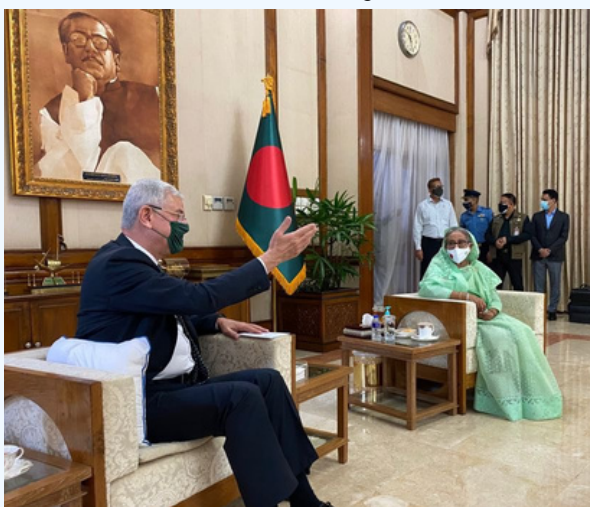
2.5. Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes partnerships as a critical vehicle in advancing the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. At the country level, multi-stakeholder partnerships were forged through individual UN agency programmes and a number of UN joint programmes, aligning with the Immediate Socio-Economic Response Framework for COVID-19 and the UNDAF (2017-2021).

In 2021, considering Bangladesh's graduation from LDC status and the consequent shift in the nature of the development cooperation landscape, the UN in Bangladesh is supporting the Government in creating multi-stakeholder platforms for engagement; by supporting strategy development, planning and reporting; showcasing the country's strengths and challenges, and; facilitating partnership development and management.

Box 7: Supporting the Mission of the President of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly to Bangladesh

Photo: UN PGA and UNRCO Bangladesh



On 25-26 May 2021, the President of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır, paid an official visit to Bangladesh. President Bozkır was received in Dhaka by H.E. Ms. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh and proceeded to meet with government counterparts including H.E. Mr. AK Abdul Momen, Minister for Foreign Affairs. While in Dhaka, President Bozkır delivered the sixth lecture of the Bangabandhu Lecture Series at the Foreign Service Academy of Bangladesh, which focused on the relationship between Bangladesh and the United Nations, and met with the UN Country Team in Bangladesh, led by UN Resident Coordinator Mia Seppo. At the end of his visit, the President travelled to Cox's Bazar, where he also met with the representatives of the Rohingya people. He was joined there by Mr. Shah Rezwan Hayat, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, Ms. Mia Seppo, UN Resident Coordinator, and camp authorities.



Strengthening Partnerships and Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Engagement



Photo: Press Information Department

Over the course of the year, the UN in Bangladesh held policy discussions with development partners to address the growing challenges of sustainable financing to advance the 2030 Agenda. This included, for example, the EU-UN consultations focused on programming in the areas of Inclusive Governance, Human Capital Development, as well as Green and Inclusive Development, and efforts to localise, global initiatives like the Food Systems Summit.

The Local Consultative Group (LCG) is a key coordination and partnership forum between government and development partners in Bangladesh, supporting development coordination under a national development plan, with a strong focus on promoting

principles of partnership. The activity of the LCG is structured around the activities of its Working Groups, which have been created to facilitate aid coordination activities within each sector of relevance to the Government. In an effort to better align with national priorities and adapt to the changes in the economic, social and political landscape, a restructuring of the Working Groups took place in 2021.

A key objective of UN Development System reform involves equipping the UN to partner more effectively at the local level, including with the private sector.

The Global Compact Local Network in Bangladesh supports companies to become partner-ready so they can make meaningful contributions to the 2030 Agenda. Through a diverse range of awareness raising and capacity building initiatives, in 2021 the UN partnered with the Global Compact Local Network in Bangladesh to inform the UNSDCF 2022-2026 by ensuring that the perspective of the private sector was reflected in the UN's analysis, planning, and implementation efforts. 2021 also saw the first and very promising high-profile national dialogue between public and private sectors on "Sustainable Blue Economy in Bangladesh through Sustainable Blue Bond".

GenU is a public-private-youth partnership with an ambitious goal of enabling **17 million** opportunities for young people to quality education and training, employment, youth entrepreneurship and youth engagement in the country by 2025. Based on Steering Committee recommendations, a Road Map for 2021–2025 was developed and throughout 2021, GenU organized a series of taskforce meetings, intended at unpacking emerging priorities for action to serve the GenU agenda, under each of the four thematic areas: (a) Youth Education and Skills; (b) Youth Employment; (c) Youth Entrepreneurship; and (d) Youth Civic Engagement. From September 2020 to September 2021, GenU Bangladesh Foundation Partners reported a total reach of 11 million youth.

Supporting Strategy Development, Planning and Reporting

The UNSDCF is a centrepiece of UN Development System reform, reflecting a clear articulation of the UN Development System’s collective response to support Bangladesh in its path towards achieving the SDGs. Embodying the spirit of partnerships at the core of the 2030 Agenda, it aims to transform the UN’s collective promise to “leave no one behind” into tangible action in support of people on the ground. In 2021, dedicated dialogues were organized with civil society, academia, government and development partners to prepare the UNSDCF for 2022-2026. Through the CF formulation process, some **230 government officials** from over **80 government ministries, departments and institutions** were consulted with, while the UN sought to engage more systematically with non-resident agencies (NRAs) early on in the process. Engaging young people was also at the heart of the UN’s consultation processes for the UNSDCF, particularly given Bangladesh is a Youth2030 Fast Track Country. For the preparation of the UNSDCF in Bangladesh, over **91,000 adolescents and youth** were consulted, with respondents representing both rural and urban views (including those from urban slums) as well as employed and unemployed youth. The views of several other marginalized groups were also represented.



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

Strengthening Sustainable Food Systems in Bangladesh

Throughout 2021, the UN, led by FAO, supported Bangladesh's participation in the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) process. The Government's engagement was led by the Ministry of Food with an initial focus on Action Track One: "Ensure Access to Safe and Nutritious Food for All", linking to the other four Action Tracks. To help the Government prepare for the UNFSS, three national and six sub-national member state dialogues that took place between January and September 2021. In addition, independent dialogues were organised by the UN in collaboration with other development partners and civil society organizations. Building on momentum generated throughout the year, in September 2021 the Government unveiled the "National Pathway Document Towards Sustainable Food Systems in Bangladesh" for the first ever UNFSS, convened during the UN General Assembly on September 23. The plan seeks to transform food systems and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda, and was developed in alignment with national policies, following a consultative process.

Financing 2030

In 2021, the Development Finance Assessment (DFA) and SDG Financing Strategy (FS) for Bangladesh were updated through rigorous consultation with relevant stakeholders in the new context of the country's graduation from the LDC category, aligning priorities with the 8th Five-Year Plan, and tackling the adverse impacts of COVID-19. The assessment and strategy will help the Government mobilize and more effectively utilize both public and private finance for the SDGs with proper integration of a gender perspective.

Toward this end, three SDG-specific financing roadmaps have been drafted for SDG 6,7, and 13 in collaboration with relevant Government ministries and SDG-specific stakeholders including development partners, IFIs, the private sector, and CSOs.



2.6. Results of the UN working more and better together: UN coherence, effectiveness and efficiency

During the year, UN agencies in Bangladesh took on a number of initiatives jointly, exploring new ways of working together in planning programming, advocacy and operations. A new UNSDCF was co-designed and formulated together with the Government (see section 2.4) and some 21 joint projects, programmes and initiatives are under way (Annex). The thematic groups (Gender Equality; Human Rights; PVE; and further groups working on enhancing coherence, coordination and visibility) of the UNCT brought UN agencies forward key issues and themes in a model of distributed leadership across agencies.

Select UN Joint Programmes in Bangladesh



Photo: ILO Bangladesh

ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women in collaboration with the Government, the Bangladesh Tea Association, and Bangladesh Cha Shramik Union, implemented a joint project to enhance the capacities of female tea garden workers and their families in Sylhet Division to negotiate, monitor and access social protection.



Photo: UN Women Bangladesh

ILO, UNCDF, UNDP and UN Women joined forces to develop an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) for SDGs. In follow up, the UN worked closely with the Government to produce a Development Finance Assessment (DFA) and a Financing Strategy for the 8th Five-Year Plan and SDGs, with UN Women ensuring a strong gender equality analysis of the DFA and the inclusion of a gender perspective in the macroeconomic framework.



Photo: UNFPA Bangladesh

UNICEF, UNFPA & WHO partnered with the Government to implement Adolescent-friendly Health Corners (AFHS) across the country, with the Obstetric and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh, BRAC and NGO partners providing technical content development, supervision and monitoring support.

UNICEF and WHO, along with UN entities worked closely alongside Gavi, USAID and World Bank to support the Government to implement the BPRP and restore access to quality essential services during COVID-19.

UN Women, UNCDF, and UNDP collaborated to “Deliver as One” through the Joint Programme “Women’s Empowerment for Inclusive Growth (WING)”, drawing on their unique set of capacities, expertise, partner networks and comparative advantages. As part of this, 2000 women entrepreneurs’ capacities were enhanced through the “Anondomela” (an online business platform) initiative with the Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI) providing further support in building the capacity of women entrepreneurs to run businesses online.



Photo: UNHCR Bangladesh

The UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF joint project on “Quality Education for Rohingya Refugees and Host Communities in Cox’s Bazar” provided 3,200 parents/caregivers (1,850 female) with parenting education through home-based learning sessions in Rohingya camps as well surrounding host communities in Cox’s Bazar.



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh

UNDP, UNFPA, ILO, UNWOMEN & UNICEF implemented the UN partnership for the rights of persons with disabilities program –the first UN joint programme on disability in Bangladesh. This included a comprehensive situation analysis of disability inclusion in the country with clear recommendation for the further actions.

UNFPA and WHO, jointly supported the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), to strengthen national health systems and services to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage (UHC) across Bangladesh and improve the sexual and reproductive health outcomes for women of reproductive age.

Gender Equality



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

In 2021, the Gender Equality Thematic Group (GETG) of the UNCT worked closely with the Government and other key partners to enhance coordination, dialogue, and knowledge platforms to promote gender equality. Over the course of the year, the GETG helped update the National Action Plan of the Women Development Policy 2011, led by MOWCA, while the UNCT led consultations with MOWCA on key gender equality priorities during the formulation process of the UNSDCF (2022-2026). Through the GETG, the UN ensured a dedicated Strategic Priority (SP) on Gender Equality and elimination of GBV in the new UNSDCF, in line with Government priorities laid out in the 8th Five-Year Plan. Informed by the voice of CSOs and in consultation with government, the SP focuses on strengthening national capacities and accountability of duty bearers, and supporting rights' holders participation to drive policy and social change on gender equality and GBV.

Under the leadership of the UNCT, the GETG also leveraged the Gender Equality Scorecard and Action Plan to generate greater ownership and accountability in mainstreaming gender equality across UN programmes and operations. As a result, 11 out of 22 of the Outcome indicators in the Results Framework of the new UNSDCF track progress towards gender equality results in line with SDGs.

The GETG also worked together with CSOs to jointly advocate for reform of national rape laws. This culminated in a new commitment from the Government expressed by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs of repealing Section 155 (4) of the Evidence Act, 1872, which allows defense lawyers to use character evidence against rape complainants during trials. Swift measures to repeal the clause were reiterated during a national dialogue marking the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which was jointly organized by the UN, the LCG WAGE, MOWCA, with participation from a wide range of CSOs and other stakeholders. With support from CSOs, the UN also worked to validate the Sexual Harassment (Prevention and Protection) Act, which was jointly drafted with National Human Rights Commission. As of the end of 2021, the draft law is now with Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs for review and enactment.

Human Rights

The Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) continued its work to strengthen human rights protection and promotion; build national capacities to engage on human rights issues, and; increase the advocacy capacity of the UN system to advance human rights issues on the national agenda. As part of its efforts throughout 2021, the HRWG continued advocacy to promote the right to equality and the principle of non-discrimination, culminating in the approval of a draft 'Anti-Discrimination Act' by the Cabinet of Bangladesh. In compliance with the Paris Principles and recommendations made by the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) and Global Alliance of NHRI (GANHRI), an amendment to the National Human Rights Commission Act 2009 was also submitted to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs by the National Human Rights Commission. Through consistent efforts to mainstream the human rights-based approach across UN programming and decision-making, the HRWG was also instrumental in the development of an inclusive, gender-sensitive, human rights-anchored UNSDCF.



Photo: UNDP Bangladesh

Sustaining Peace and Social Cohesion

The UN continued to facilitate coordination, dialogue and knowledge platforms on conflict prevention and the prevention of violence extremism through the inter-agency Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) Working Group. Coordination with development partners on PVE, hate speech, and social cohesion was strengthened through the regular convening of the Working Group alongside an external working group on P/CVE. The group analyzed and shared information on the changing landscape, trends and patterns relating to peace, conflict, and violent extremism in Bangladesh. The Group also played a central role in organizing a Research Stocktaking Workshop on gender and violent extremism, bringing together government actors, CSOs, researchers, academics, youth, media and UN agencies.

A Multi-Year-Appeal provided an opportunity for the PVE Working Group to develop a One UN PVE Programme in Bangladesh. Bringing together five UN agencies working on PVE and Hate Speech issues, the group worked together to develop a proposal for joint programming on PVE and Hate Speech.

Enhancing Coherence, Coordination, and Visibility

Over the course of the year, the UN also continued to strengthen inter-agency collaboration and coordination at the programmatic level, while streamlining processes and systems to increase UN effectiveness. UNFPA and UNDP co-chaired the Programme Management Team (PMT), which played an instrumental role in the formulation of the UNSDCF (2022-2026).

Meanwhile, the UN Communications Group (UNCG) worked throughout the year to deliver joint communication and advocacy for the UNCT. The group amplified UN messaging collectively, delivering communications in English and various local languages, on topics including UNSDCF; the 16 Days of Activism to End GBV; Gender Equality; Human Rights; LDC Graduation; Joint UN Programming; Covid-19 Recovery; Misinformation and Disinformation; COP-26 and Climate Action; Humanitarian Action; Refugee Issues; Peacekeeping, and Multilingualism, among others. The group worked closely with a range of actors including youth groups, development partners and other CSOs to reach millions of people.



Photo: UNRCO Bangladesh

Relatedly, the Operation Management Team (OMT) has helped support the UNCT in dealing with operational matters and implementing the Business Operations Strategy (BOS)—a results-based framework focused on improving joint business operations of 21 UN entities in 2021 to eliminate duplication, leverage the UNCT's common bargaining power, and maximize economies of scale in Bangladesh. As the UN embarks on implementing the UNSDCF, BOS has begun paving the way to improve the quality and lower the cost of business operations—freeing up more resources for programme delivery and ensuring gender-responsive dimensions in operations. BOS implementation began with 33 proposed common services contributing to an estimated USD 2,739,060 cost avoidance over five years. BOS also includes advocacy efforts with contractors and service providers on gender-responsive procurement and integrates disability and inclusion considerations into its common service business processes. Training on PSEA, PSHAA, and disability inclusion for UN personnel has also been set up as through the BOS—due to take place over the coming four years.

2.7. Evaluations and Lessons Learned

An evaluation of the UNDAF 2017-2021 brought forth certain lessons learned. A changing development environment, a significant agenda of Global UN Reform, and a humanitarian crisis have created the perfect storm from which to learn lessons for future joint programming. Despite these exceptional circumstances there has been strong leadership recognised for its inclusiveness and propensity for partnership, and there have been results achieved, albeit not linked to the UNDAF results framework. These results resonate with the priorities set out within the UNDAF outcomes for People, Planet and Prosperity, and in some cases have taken forward effective cross-sectoral coordination, joint programmes, and strengthened policy dialogue. While fragmentation within the UN in Bangladesh has been reported, more joined up and reformed ways of working is on the rise, and the UN's comparative advantage continues to be recognised and respected.

These results resonate with the priorities set out within the UNDAF outcomes for People, Planet and Prosperity, and in some cases have taken forward effective cross-sectoral coordination, joint programmes, and strengthened policy dialogue.

The evaluation highlighted the importance of robust joint output planning, implementation, and monitoring for results to be realised. While output-level programming has proceeded at the agency level, there has been no joint monitoring of outcomes against the UNDAF results framework. Despite this, the evidence base for programming has been strengthened through the initiatives of the joint data group, which will support the monitoring of subsequent strategic frameworks. In addition, there has been effective joint policy advocacy led by the UN alongside key development partners—which has increased the potential for extended partnership development, including with different levels of government and with key partner groups such as private sector and civil society.

Bangladesh's development environment continues to evolve, with potential changes to established relationships that will require joint programming instruments to adapt to maintain their relevance. There is a sense of urgency to progress programming objectives that prioritise policy development, and implementation that directly contributes to the sustainability of development results and the national institutions that have responsibility for them. In addition, the transition from a priority for Official Development Assistance (ODA) to trade has highlighted the importance of the UN's responsibility to advocate for a balanced approach that advances gender equity, focuses on Bangladesh's marginalised and most vulnerable, and protects and promotes human rights while supporting the government's agenda for economic growth and trade.

The current UNDAF has not held the UN in Bangladesh to account—to a large extent because of the priority given to additional joint strategic frameworks developed within the planning cycle. This reinforces the need for a flexible, robust results framework that can accommodate novel strategic priorities and additional monitoring needs whilst still supporting implementation of the UNDAF’s planned results. These structures need to be designed in such a way to increase levels of accountability, increase knowledge sharing, and finesse joint implementation and monitoring practices. This would include articulating the links to external coordination mechanisms and outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator—elements missing in the current UNDAF.

The UN’s relevance is strongest and its comparative advantage most understood when its work is clearly aligned with national development plans and UN reform is illustrated through reduced fragmentation and transaction costs for partners. There remains a need to strengthen the connection between results achieved by individual UN entities and joint programmes, and the UNDAF results framework, as a means to more accurately determine the UN’s contribution to the achievement of planned national development results. A further focus on the way in which UN entities work together to translate policy development into long-term and sustainable change through joint engagement with key institutions, implementing partners and beneficiaries is needed. At the same time, joint programming must be adaptable to shocks and crises, requiring agreement with national counterparts and donors to be able to channel current resources to new and pressing priorities, to build new or different partnerships, and to diversify funding streams.

Cross-cutting thematic groups —because of their interagency nature— are effective mechanisms for coordinating cross-sectoral responses. In this UNDAF cycle humanitarian coordination has been particularly effective due to the positioning of centrally-located dedicated resources in the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator and the commitment to working through established inter-agency coordination structures. Government-led coordination structures are also important to engage with to ensure clear linkages between the UN’s contributions and national development priorities. They do not however replace the need for UN-specific forums for information sharing, development of agreed positions, joint monitoring and the synergising of project and programme priorities, particularly in common geographic locations or institutions.

The Office of the UN Resident Coordinator has a unique and important role to play in the ongoing implementation of UN reform and support for the coordination mechanisms of the UNDAF, including ensuring regular reporting to the UNCT on outcome status and resource utilisation and therefore a senior level of accountability for joint programming results. This year has shown that strong leadership by the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNCT has a direct bearing on the UN’s capacity to remain nimble and responsive in the face of crisis, but in its capacity to deliver with greater coherence and effectiveness, while remaining fit-for-purpose.

2.8. Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

In 2021, the UN's Development Programme delivery amounted to USD 296 million (Table 1), while programme delivery for flood and cyclone response amounted to USD 60.5 million (Table 2). The Rohingya humanitarian response amounted USD575.8 million in delivery (Table 3) as of 31 December 2021. Within the development programme delivery under the three pillars of the UNDAF (People, Planet and Prosperity), approximately 50% of the delivery was under the first outcome (people) covering basic services, social protection, and good governance (Figure 7).

Table 1: UN Agencies Development Programme Delivery 2021 (USD)

SL.	Agencies	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Grand Total 2021
1	FAO	7,387,192	7,746,690	4,123,793	19,257,675
2	IFAD		17,789,757	30,221,671	48,011,428
3	ILO	1,308,051	-	4,240,139	5,548,190
4	IOM	3,957,565	-	7,978,258	11,935,823
5	UNAIDS	63,750	-	-	63,750
6	UNCDF	426,073	3,786,073	1,807,224	6,019,370
7	UNDP	14,530,000	35,430,000	6,950,000	56,910,000
8	UNESCO	1,230,000	-	200,000	1,430,000
9	UNFPA	24,270,000	-	2,934,000	27,204,000
10	UNHCR	-	-	-	-
11	UNICEF	35,860,000	1,970,000	8,020,000	45,850,000
12	UNIDO	-	126,000	-	126,000
13	UNODC	4,025,000	-	-	4,025,000
14	UNOPS	-	456,437	-	456,437
15	UNWOMEN	2,945,528	510,266	1,060,718	4,516,512
16	WFP	21,408,928	1,634,336	11,131,729	34,174,993
17	WHO	30,499,345	-	-	30,499,345
	Total UN	147,911,432	69,449,559	78,667,532	296,028,523

Figure 7: UN Agencies Development Programme Delivery 2021

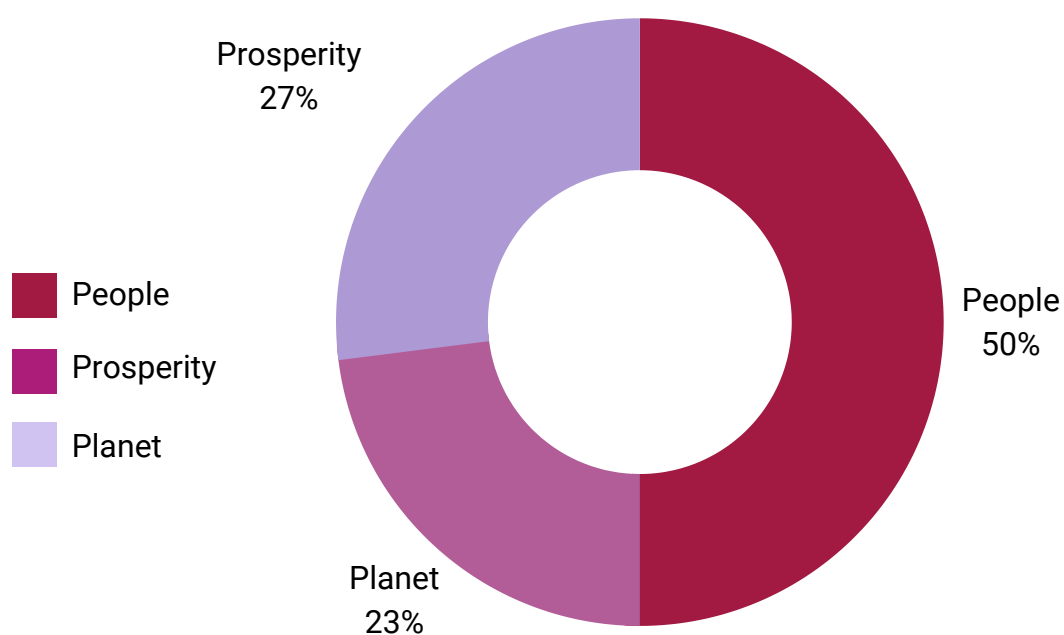


Table 2: UN Agencies' Humanitarian Programme Delivery (excluding delivery JRP) 2021 (USD)

SL.	Agencies	2021
1	FAO	1,803,278
2	IOM	320,598
3	UNAIDS	58,258
4	UNFPA	1,410,000
5	UNICEF	21,400,000
6	UNODC	130,000
7	UNOPS	14,522,005
8	UNWOMEN	5,615,579
9	WFP	8,015,100
10	WHO	7,567,195
	Total UN	60,521,415

**Table 3: Amount Received Under the Joint Response Plan
(in USD Million)**

UNFPA	43.3
WFP	198.3
WHO	5.5
UNHCR	137.1
UN Women	1.3
UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund	4.1
IOM	94.8
FAO	0.8323
UNICEF	90.6
Total UN	575.83

CHAPTER 3

UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR





Photo: UNFPA Bangladesh

With the the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026) officially signed, in the coming year the UN will work in close partnership with the Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance to operationalize the Cooperation Framework through the development of joint workplans. The Cooperation Framework for Bangladesh contains elements of post-pandemic recovery as well as support for transition out of the LDC status, with the development aspirations of the most vulnerable groups in Bangladesh at its core.

A key new development that will affect the economy of Bangladesh, is the impact of the war in Ukraine. The UNCT will adapt its work in an agile manner to support the Government in mitigating the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable groups in Bangladesh. The UNCT's efforts will be driven by the purpose of protecting gains in SDGs and accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

The UN will leverage the entire spectrum of collaborative and cooperative models of work in delivering on the ambitious multi-sectoral outcomes of the Cooperation Framework. These will include joint projects and programmes where relevant, joint programming, joint advocacy, and communications, coordinated implementation where relevant, as well as different shared funding modalities. These will reduce transaction costs, provide value-for-money, and reap the economies of scale and scope in maximizing impact. UN agencies will provide further support to the development and implementation of activities within the Cooperation Framework, which may include technical support, policy advice, project implementation –directly or through implementing partners, advocacy, research, and capacity development.

ANNEX 1: UN Joint Programmes in Bangladesh

Initiative	UN Agencies	Development Partners	Contributing Line Ministry
<p>Smallholder Agricultural Competitiveness Project (SACP)</p> <p>[August 2018 - September 2024]</p>	IFAD, FAO	N/A	Ministry of Agriculture
<p>Promoting Resilience of Vulnerable through Access to Infrastructure, Improved Skills and Information (PROVATI3)</p> <p>[February 2019 - March 2026]</p>	IFAD, WFP	N/A	Local Government Engineering Department
<p>Diversified Resilient Agriculture for Improved Food and Nutrition Security (DRAIFNS)</p> <p>[2023 - 2027]</p>	IFAD, FAO	World Bank administered GAFSP	Ministry of Agriculture
<p>Enhance access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and information in Cox's Bazaar</p> <p>[August 2019 - July 2021]</p>	UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNHCR, UNICEF	Bandhu Social Welfare Society, Light House, Save the Children and the AIDS/STD Program	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Initiative	UN Agencies	Development Partners	Contributing Line Ministry
<p>Support the Department of Social Services (DSS) and MoWCA to build the capacities and establish the mechanism for community engagement to end AIDS.</p> <p>[January 2022 - December 2023]</p>	<p>UNAIDS, UNICEF</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and; Ministry of Social Welfare</p>
<p>Provision of Community-led Sustainable and Integrated SRHR and HIV prevention programme for Female Sex Workers around 8 brothels in Bangladesh</p> <p>[January 2022 - December 2023]</p>	<p>UNAIDS, UNFPA</p>	<p>Light House, AIDS/STD Program</p>	<p>Ministry of Health and Family Welfare</p>
<p>National advocacy and training on comprehensive harm reduction and legal issues related with harm reduction. Promotion of human rights and evidence-based interventions to address HIV, TB and viral hepatitis transmission</p> <p>[January 2022 - December 2023]</p>	<p>UNAIDS, UNODC</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare</p>

Initiative	UN Agencies	Development Partners	Contributing Line Ministry
SAFE Plus [April 2022 - March 2025]	UNHCR, IOM, WFP, FAO	DFID, Global Affairs Canada, Norway, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), SIDA, PRM, Japan, Australia, ECHO, KOICA, JTS	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Forest Department, Dept. of Agriculture Extension, Bangladesh Water Development Board, Dept. of Environment, Dept. of Agriculture Marketing, Chamber of Commerce
Nutritional wellbeing of children [2022]	UNHCR, WFP	N/A	N/A
Integrated National Financing Framework for Accelerating Achievement of SDGs (INFF4SDGs) in Bangladesh [June 2020 - December 2022]	UNDP, UNCDF, ILO, UN Women	EU, all IFIs (the project is globally funded by EU through the Joint SDG Fund. IFIs are important stakeholders)	Economic Relations Division, Finance Division, Government Engineering Department, Prime Minister's Office
Enhancing social protection for female tea garden workers and their families in Sylhet division [January 2020 - March 2022]	ILO as lead with UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women	Sweden, EU, Netherlands, Norway, Swiss, Denmark, Germany (under Multi Partner Trust Fund), Joint SDG Fund.	Ministry of Labour and Employment (Focal), Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Mass and Primary Education, Ministry of family and Planning

Initiative	UN Agencies	Development Partners	Contributing Line Ministry
<p>Women's Empowerment for Inclusive Growth (WING)</p> <p>[2020-2023]</p>	<p>UN WOMEN as lead with UNDP and UNCDF</p>	<p>The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>National Resilience Programme (NRP)</p> <p>[2018-2022]</p>	<p>UNDP, UN Women, and UNOPS</p>	<p>FCDO, SIDA</p>	<p>Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Planning, and the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives</p>
<p>Blueprint for joint action for Refugee children</p> <p>[2020-2022]</p>	<p>UNHCR, UNICEF</p>	<p>N/A</p>	
<p>Local Government Initiatives on Climate change (LoGIC)</p> <p>[July 2016 - December 2022]</p>	<p>UNDP, UNCDF</p>	<p>EU</p>	<p>Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives</p>