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UN.
Better
World.

UN & Bangladesh Partnership



The Struggle for Liberation: The Beginning of Bangladesh and UN Partnership

The relationship of Bangladesh and the United Nations began in the formative Liberation War of 1971, when the 1970 elections in Bangladesh (formerly known as East Pakistan) was won in a landslide victory by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, yet was not recognized by the Pakistan Central Government. Up to this point, there had been ongoing tension between West and East Pakistan, and the election was perceived as the final straw. Bengali nationalists initiated guerilla warfare in the territory, and in response the Pakistani army cracked down on the citizenry. In March 1971, millions of people sought refuge in neighbouring India, and on the 23rd of April, the Government of India requested the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance to East Pakistan refugees.

Then Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, initiated the UNHCR led response with initial assistance from WFP and UNICEF. The Secretary-General was gravely concerned with the situation in East Pakistan and the responsibility of the United Nations. He sent a letter to Pakistani President, Yahya Khan, citing Article 2, Paragraph 7 of the United Nations Charter, that states, "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the UN to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII," which set out the responsibilities of the Security Council.

Negotiating with the Pakistan Government, it was agreed that the UN would monitor the administration of humanitarian aid to the people of East Pakistan, and ensure unrestricted communication and safe passage of the international humanitarian community to deliver assistance. This mission would become UNEPRO (the United Nations East Pakistan Relief Operation), spearheaded by Bagha A. El-Tawil, who was appointed as the representative of the Secretary-General for the operations.

Voluntary repatriation of refugees in India became a way in which to begin normalizing the situation, and it was agreed that UNHCR would assist in the return and rehabilitation of refugees in coordination with UNEPRO. In July 1971, a coordinating body was established with the Government of India that included UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO and the League of Red Cross Societies. With escalating conflict in the region, the Secretary-General placed a memorandum before the Security Council expressing concern both for humanitarian issues and the threat to peace and security. By this point India and Pakistan were waging a conflict of their own at the Jammu and Kashmir border, with both sides contributing to the political instability in the region.

From the Ashes: Birth of a Nation

Negotiations and debate on the conflict in the sub-continent continued at the UN in New York, but were otherwise unsuccessful. The Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden sponsored a draft resolution for the General Assembly to appeal to both India and Pakistan to promote voluntary repatriation of refugees, and to continue humanitarian efforts of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner of Refugees. During the General Assembly, Member States debated in favour of cease-fire and troop withdrawal in India and Pakistan. Part of these discussions included the fate of East Pakistan, with India recognizing the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

On 16 December 1971, India announced at the Security Council that Pakistan armed forces had surrendered, and reaffirmed it had no ambitions to claim territorial ownership of East Pakistan. The Security Council met again on 21 December 1971, and the President announced that an agreement had been reached. Resolution 307 (1971) was adopted, which called for a ceasefire, the repatriation of refugees, and continued relief operations in the region. Finally, on 2 July 1972, India and Pakistan signed the Simla Agreement, ending their conflict and committing to observing the principles and purpose of the United Nations Charter. With the regional conflict winding down, the People's Republic of Bangladesh emerged as a new state.

UN Relief Missions in Times of Emergency: UNEPRO (United Nations East Pakistan Relief Operation) and UNROD (United Nations Relief Operations in Dacca)

UNEPRO was established to address the worsening crisis in East Pakistan and the refugees who fled to India in 1971. UNHCR took the lead in coordinating humanitarian assistance in partnership with the Indian Government and with the support of UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO and the League of Red Cross Societies. During this time UNHCR provided relief to 10 million Bengali refugees in India. As the conflict worsened, the UN evacuated UNEPRO staff to Singapore. Headed by Paul-Marc Henry, 37 UN officials volunteered to stay and maintain UN presence in Dhaka. With the International Red Cross, the group provided safe havens and ensured the observance of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Eventually four neutral zones were established under the protection of the United Nations and the Red Cross.

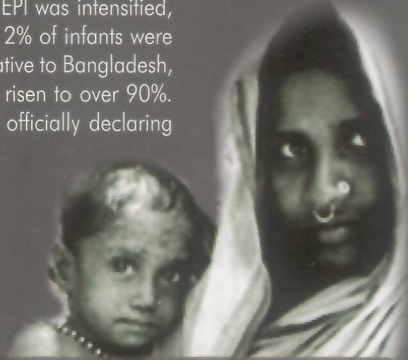
UNROD was launched by the Secretary-General in December 1971 to continue the relief operations of UNEPRO. Staff who had been evacuated returned to their posts, with transport and supplies being shipped to Chittagong from Singapore. UNROD was used to harmonise humanitarian assistance, establish longer-term rehabilitation, and was the instrument the UN used to contribute resources and specialists, comprising of UNICEF, FAO, WHO, The International Bank, IMF, UNDP, the International Telecommunications Union, ILO, UNESCO, and UNIDO. After meeting the immediate needs of the country, the Secretary-General assessed in 1973 that external assistance would continually be required in the country, and UNROD maintained a reduced presence in Bangladesh after the termination of UNROD on 31 March 1973.



1970s

"Near miracle": The Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) Begins

The Expanded Programme on Immunization officially began on 7 April 1979 for vaccination against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), tuberculosis, measles and polio. In 1985, in partnership with the Government, UNICEF, WHO, a range of local and international NGOs, and Development Partners, EPI was intensified, with particular focus on the administration of the oral polio vaccine. Up until 1985 less than 2% of infants were immunized, and within a decade infants immunized jumped to 62%. Former UNICEF Representative to Bangladesh, Dodge Cole, described it as a "near miracle". As of 2013, immunization child coverage has risen to over 90%. These efforts have contributed to eradicating polio in the country by 2006, with the WHO officially declaring Bangladesh and 10 other countries in the South-East Asia region as polio-free in 2014.



The National Family Planning Programme

The National Family Planning Programme of Bangladesh has been one of the most successful health initiatives spearheaded by the Government and Development Partners, intensified and expanded with UNFPA support in 1974. Family Planning has made it possible for young women to delay having children, space child-bearing, and choose the number of children, which has freed them to join the labour force. It's led to less pregnancy and delivery-related deaths, and young women and girls were also far less likely to experience unwanted or early pregnancy, unsafe abortions, and pregnancy related disabilities.

Ahead of the Curve: Bangladesh Eradicates Smallpox Before Global Eradication

After 3,000 years of existence, smallpox was officially declared eradicated in 1979 due to a collaborative global vaccination programme led by the WHO. Four years before official global eradication, 3 year old Rahima was the last known smallpox case in the country.

Bangladesh Becomes a Member of the Security Council in 1978

What is the role of Security Council Members?

The UN uses several mechanisms to resolve conflicts, one of them is the Security Council, which has fifteen members (five permanent and ten non-permanent). The UN Security Council has the mandate to deploy Peacekeepers, decide on enforcement measures and economic sanctions, and in some cases has the power to initiate collective military action. If the Security Council is considered failing to act, the General Assembly can also make recommendations and adopt resolutions. For a resolution to be adopted in the Security Council, nine of the fifteen countries in the Security Council must vote in favour. However, the five permanent members of the Council (United States of America, France, Russia, China, and the United Kingdom) each have veto powers.

How many are we?

Bangladesh's First National Population and Housing Census

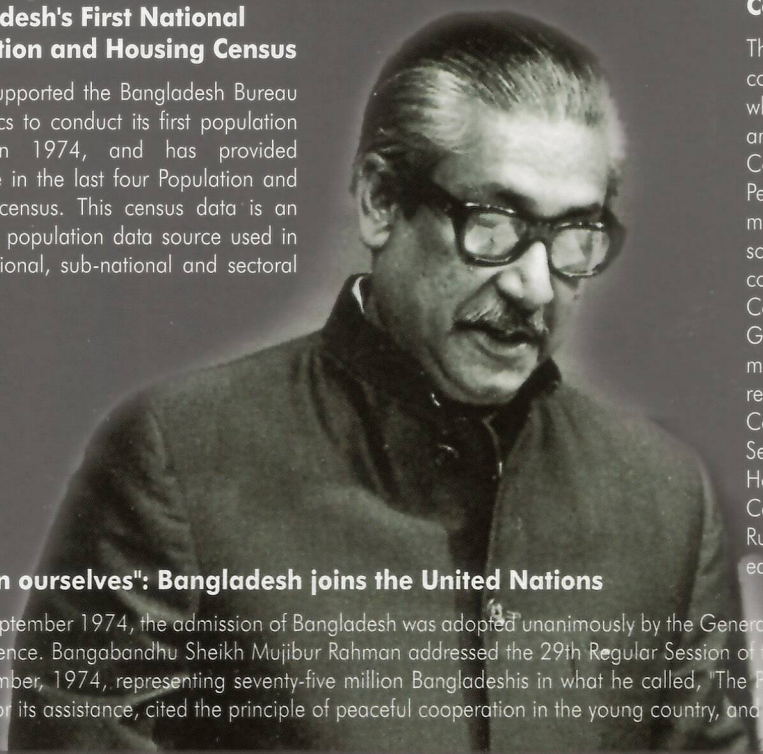
UNFPA supported the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics to conduct its first population census in 1974, and has provided assistance in the last four Population and Housing census. This census data is an important population data source used in direct national, sub-national and sectoral planning.

1974

"Faith in ourselves": Bangladesh joins the United Nations

On 17 September 1974, the admission of Bangladesh was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly, recognizing its sovereignty and independence. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed the 29th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly in New York on 25 September, 1974, representing seventy-five million Bangladeshis in what he called, "The Parliament of Man". He thanked the United Nations for its assistance, cited the principle of peaceful cooperation in the young country, and stated in his conclusion:

[I am] re-affirming my faith in the indomitable spirit of man - in the capacity of the people to achieve the impossible and to overcome insurmountable odds... International cooperation and the sharing of resources and technology could no doubt [make the task of self-reliance] less onerous and reduce the cost in human suffering. But for us in the emerging world, ultimately we must have faith in ourselves, in our capacity through the united and concerted efforts of our peoples to fulfil our destiny and to build for ourselves a better future.



Promoting Bangladesh through Information and Literacy

Since 1981 UNIC has been providing information about the UN and Bangladesh in the country and globally. UNIC provides Bangla-language translations of publications from the UN and also promotes literacy and education through school programmes and the formation of a library network across the country. Additionally, UNIC engages young Bangladeshis in UN activities through the establishment of the first Model United Nations in Bangladesh in 2002 in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1980s

Member of the Commission on Human Rights

Bangladesh was a member of the Commission on Human Rights from 1983 to 2000 and also from 2006 to 2012 as a member of the Human Rights Council, with the Government establishing the independent National Human Rights Commission in 2008. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR) was established in 1946 through the United Nations Charter to create and develop the international legal framework that protects fundamental human rights and freedoms. It is a forum where countries large and small, non-Governmental groups and human rights defenders from around the world voice their concerns. In 2006 CHR was replaced by the Human Rights Council.

Bangladesh Chairs the Group of 77 (G-77)

Established in 1964 the Group of 77 is a coalition of 77 developing countries, which provides a platform for these countries to articulate and promote their collective economic interests, enhance their negotiating capacity within the UN and promote South-South cooperation.



Humayan Rashid Choudhury becomes 41st President of the UN General Assembly in 1986

State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

In 1984, Bangladesh ratified CEDAW committing to the global advancement of women's rights. Building on this commitment, the Beijing Platform for Action was declared at the Fourth World Conference of Women in 1995, defining national actions for gender equality and empowerment. In response, Bangladesh developed the National Women's Advancement Policy, and National Action Plan with the support of UN Women.



Bangladesh deploys first UN Peacekeepers

Bangladesh deployed its first Peacekeeping troops in 1988, sending 15 military observers to participate in the Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIMOG). Starting from a group of 15, Bangladesh has sent over 135,000 troops, police, and military experts to missions around the world, and is the Top Troop Contributing Country to Peacekeeping Operations.

Food for Vulnerable Groups

Social protection in Bangladesh started in 1974, in response to the acute food crisis of that year. During the 1980s, WFP in partnership with the Government started the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Programme, which focused on food security and provides hundreds of thousands of ultra-poor women and their families an opportunity to move out of extreme poverty. In 2010 the VGD Programme was handed over to the Government in full, and is today one of the largest national social safety net programmes of the Government.

Working Towards a Green Future

In 1992, Bangladesh attended the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Directly after, Bangladesh introduced the Environment Act of 1995 and the Environment Rule in 1997 to strengthen the newly established Ministry of Environment and Forest, and the links between environment and resource management. UNDP led the Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP), which linked environment with poverty reduction strategies across the sectors, addressing issues of alternative sources of energy, reducing vehicle emissions, and access to improved drinking water sources. SEMP was also proactive in engaging private sector such as investment in the first Hybrid-Hoffman technology (green brick' factories) that halves carbon emissions.

1990s



Bangladesh Commits to Reducing Maternal Mortality

In the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, Bangladesh committed to universal sexual and reproductive health to all its citizens and to cut maternal mortality by 75% in 20 years. UNFPA and WHO supported programmes in improving emergency obstetric care, training of medical professionals, and increasing availability of life-saving medicine, which have contributed to bringing down the maternal mortality ratio from 554 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1994 to 194 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2011.

Bangladesh wins the UNESCO Peace Award in 1998

Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was granted the UNESCO Felix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize for signing the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord in 1997, ending 25 years of conflict in the CHT.

Building Resilient Communities: Establishing the Disaster Management Bureau

Following devastating floods in 1991, UNDP and Development Partners supported the establishment of the Disaster Management Bureau and finalized Bangladesh's first "Standing Order on Disasters". This began the UN's support to strengthening disaster management in the country, focusing on both preparedness in communities, Government, and coordination with local and international actors. Over the course of recent decades, Bangladesh has steadily built its defences against natural hazards including disaster resilient habitats.



Bringing Them Home: Repatriation of Bangladesh Migrants in First Gulf War

During the conflict in the Middle East, IOM repatriated 63,000 expatriate workers in the Gulf region. Since then the agency has been deeply involved in undertaking advocacy and coordinating humanitarian and migration initiatives of the country. Along with ILO, the agency supports over a million Bangladeshi expatriates working in insecure conditions abroad, and in 2011, IOM and UNHCR repatriated 35,000 Bangladeshi expatriate workers in Libya when civil war erupted.



Meena is Born in Bangladesh

Born in Bangladesh in 1991, a little girl named Meena was introduced to Bangladeshi children. Developed by UNICEF in order to confront the discrimination against girls in South Asia, she talked about issues such as education and early marriage. Conceived with the help and guidance of Hanna-Barbera Cartoons, animation was an accessible way to reach children, and today she is not only a daughter of Bangladesh but also of India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.



Today:

- 88 million citizens have two additional days of notice for impending floods
- 112 million people have access to early warning systems
- 18 million school children know how to prepare for and react to disaster
- Disaster and climate risks and vulnerabilities have been reduced for 3 million people

State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

On 26 January, 1990, Bangladesh became one of the first South Asian countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was an important milestone to promote and protect child rights in the country. In 1995, with UNICEF and ILO, a historic memorandum of understanding was signed with readymade garment manufacturers and exporters, which committed to abolishing child labour from the country's garment industry. In 2010 the National Policy for Elimination of Child Labour was adopted.

A Right to Personal Identity: A Remarkable Step Towards Recognition

With the passage of the Births and Deaths Registration Act in 2004, children born in Bangladesh must now be registered with a birth certificate. In 2006, UNICEF launched the birth registration campaign, educating people on birth registration to allow access to health and education services, and protect children from child trafficking, child marriage, and other abuses. Proof of identity and recognition allows people to access their rights to social services, and with the support of UNDP and UNHCR, later led to the process of national identity cards handed out to 81 million people, the registration of Urdu speakers as Bangladesh nationals, and the issuing of individual identification documents to registered Rohingya refugees over the age of five.

2000s

Bringing Rural Health Clinics to the Community

Piloted with the WHO's assistance to the Government, community clinics are now a hub for primary healthcare for rural communities, with each clinic catering for 6,000 people. Approximately 70% of the population have access to a community clinic, and along with primary healthcare services, the 12,714 community clinics also provide 33 types of medicine free of cost.

Bangladesh Prevents the Spread of HIV/AIDS

Bangladesh has been one of the early responders in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh and has kept the HIV prevalence low in comparison to neighbouring countries. UNAIDS leads the UN Joint Team on AIDS, which addresses the multi-dimensional nature of the disease. In 2004, the first National Monitoring and Evaluation Plan was introduced to target and monitor HIV/AIDS in the country in order to keep the prevalence rate low.





Bangladesh signs the Millennium Declaration

In 2000 the Millennium Summit brought together world leaders over three days to discuss the role of the UN in the 21st century. It is most famous for drafting the eight chapters of the Millennium Declaration and its adoption by 189 world leaders. It introduced to the world what we now know as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The founders of the United Nations set out, in the words of the Charter, to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom - above all, freedom from want and freedom from fear.
- UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, "We the Peoples" report.

A Country Mobilises: Responding to Cyclone Sidr

Cyclone Sidr in 2007 saw 3% less casualties than its predecessor in 1991, with 3.2 million people evacuated within 48 hours before the cyclone hit and stockpiled relief and rescue items having reached 70% of affected areas within 24 hours. Relief operations and recovery efforts were ongoing into the next years, with FAO, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, WHO and ILO partnering with Government to get the country back on its feet.

Within 72 hours the UN system had started delivering food and non-food items:

- 327,270 survival biscuits
- 1,100,000 Water Purification Tablets
- 6,000 jerry cans
- 400 water purifying filters
- 240,000 packets of water purification powder
- 2 mobile treatment plans and support funds to the Department of Public Health Engineering
- 1,914 recreational kits
- 350 MT flattened rice
- 70 MT molasses
- 18,000 sheets of tripol

The overall relief operations at a glance:

- 90 million USD received in total from donor countries, agencies, the UN and the Central Emergency Fund for relief and recovery efforts
- 4.3 million people across sectors helped
- 821 non-Government and community schools rehabilitated
- 80% of damaged public water points and home latrines rehabilitated
- 5,200 MT of rice and 88,667 MT of vegetables produced by landless farmers through UN support
- 2.3 million people covered by general food distribution
- 10,145 shelters raised by July 2007

Access to Information (a2i): Taking Services to the People

The Access to Information programme was introduced to the country by the Government to digitalise public service delivery, beginning the embracement of ICT as a powerful enabler for the nation's socio-economic transformation. In 2007 UNDP assisted the Government in introducing more ICT related service delivery, such as the ePayment system for payment of utility bills.

Public service delivery kiosks were also introduced and are used in:

- 4574 Union Parishads
- 321 Pouroshavas
- 407 City Corporations across the country
- More than 50 million services provided since 2010



Compressed Natural Gas (CNGs) Lowers Carbon Footprint

UNDP worked with the Government to introduce clean fuel programmes, which included the ubiquitous CNG auto-rickshaw, fuelled with compressed natural gas rather than engine fuel, and contributing to the lowering of the country's carbon footprint.

Made in Bangladesh: Quality Assurance

UNIDO's programming beginning in 2005, worked towards improving standard setting, certification, accreditation, and metrology to an internationally accepted standard, establishing the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute, Bangladesh Accreditation Board, introducing the National Quality Policy, and the promotion of ISO (International Standardisation Organisation) management standards, amongst many others, in order to ensure quality export items.

From Food Production to Food Security: The National Food Policy

The National Food Policy was approved in 2006 with the support of FAO, which applied a comprehensive and integrated approach to ensuring the right to food and food security. While agricultural development ensured shrimps were the second biggest export of the country, and rice self-sufficiency was ensured with IFAD supported initiatives, the National Food Policy broadened approaches to food security.

The objectives of the National Food Policy:

- 1. Adequate and stable supply of safe and nutritious food**
- 2. Increased purchasing power and access to food for the people**
- 3. Adequate nutrition for all individuals, especially women and children**

Reducing child mortality: Bangladesh wins MDG Award

Bangladesh is one of 23 countries on track to achieve MDG 4 to reduce child mortality, and has the fourth most rapid rate of decline in child mortality. The country has experienced a 60% reduction of under-five mortality in the last 20 years, dropping from 133 deaths per 1000 live births in 1990 to 53 deaths per 1000 live births in 2011. The Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received an award for Bangladesh's achievement in this area.

School Feeding: Increasing Children's Nutrition and School Attendance

WFP began school feeding in 2001, identifying the importance of nutrition for the development of young minds and young bodies, which has also influenced an increase in school retention. The Government adopted the UN model and is implementing its own National School Feeding Programme. From an initial 55,000 children, the Government is now delivering and funding school feeding for 1.8 million children.



2010s

Village Courts: Affordable and Timely Justice for the Poor and Marginalised

Village Courts are an alternate, local system for affordable justice, which has seen UNDP's Village Courts Programme, in partnership with Government and the support of Development Partners, provide access to justice to disadvantaged groups, poor and rural communities, in a timely manner. The court is already benefitting 400,000 underserved people.

Continuing Health Achievements: Measles-Rubella Vaccination Programme

The strong tradition of proactive immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases has been realized again in 2014, as UNICEF, the WHO and national and international partners supported the Government to roll out the largest ever measles-rubella vaccination programme.



Education for All: Mother Language Education

Linking with regional and international commitments and frameworks UNESCO has assisted the Government in implementing education initiatives to increase primary school enrolment in the country, and broaden the reach and access to education. In 2012, with support from UNESCO and UNDP, Mother Language Education services were provided by Hill District Councils, which witnessed 10% higher attendance rates than non-Mother Language Education schools. The Government has committed to the development of a comprehensive mother language education package for Pre-Primary and early grades in five ethnic languages.

Better Safety Standards for RMG Workers

After the tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza building in April 2013, the following month a Tripartite Declaration was initiated to respond to the disaster, which included a National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire and Structural Integrity. In September of the same year, representatives from Government, the garment industry, NGOs and trade unions formed the Rana Plaza Coordination Committee to develop a comprehensive and independent process that would deliver support to victims, family, and dependents in accordance with international labour standards, with the ILO acting as a neutral chair.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



List of UN Agencies

- Food and Agricultural Organisation, FAO
- International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA
- International Fund for Agricultural Development, I FAD
- International Labour Organisation, ILO
- International Organisation for Migration, IOM
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS
- United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNCDF
- United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF
- United Nations Development Programme, UNDP
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women
- United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat
- United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, UNIDO
- United Nations Information Centre, UNIC
- United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, UNODC
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNOCHA
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNOHCHR
- United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR
- United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA
- United Nations Volunteers, UNV
- World Food Programme, WFP
- World Health Organisation, WHO

there is no inequality for class, caste, colour, sexual orientation or gender identity