

# UNITED NATIONS DAY

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## The United Nations System's Support For Women in Development in Bangladesh

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### United Nations Development Programme

A priority concern of UNDP is to ensure the integration of women as participants and beneficiaries in all its development programmes and projects. This arises not only out of the recognition that women are significant contributors to economic and social development, but also from the conviction that sustainable human development is possible only if women are more effectively involved.

The focus of UNDP's women in development policy is to assist Governments, in line with national priorities and global concerns, to integrate and promote women in their development activities. It also reflects the growing need for TA agencies to deal more directly with the question of beneficiaries and target groups.

As a part of UNDP's increased emphasis on human-centered sustainable development, we have adopted a gender approach to promoting women's role in development. The new UNDP Administrator, in his address on 27 July 1993, confirmed that poverty alleviation and environmental regeneration are not possible unless the status of women is elevated. "Sustainable human development is pro-women."

UNDP's Fifth Country Programme for Bangladesh (1991-1995) pointed out that the role of women in Bangladesh had been seriously underestimated and their contribution constrained by social, economic and cultural factors. Keeping in mind that one of the strategies of the Fourth Five Year Plan was bringing women into the mainstream of development planning, the Country Programme emphasized the role of women in all social and

economic sectors with particular emphasis on employment (including agriculture production), health and education.

The objectives of the Country Programme have been translated by programmes and projects. A special effort is made to ensure that gender issues have been considered and addressed in all our projects. UNDP funds few specific WID projects but rather emphasizes women and gender issues in all our projects in all sectors. A few examples are worth noting:

#### 1. Training of Village women in Management Skills for their Self Employment and Income Generating Activities

This project, supported by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and implemented by Swarnivar Bangladesh with technical assistance from the International Labour Organization (ILO), has, as its immediate objectives of this project to (1) train Swarnivar trainers to carry out courses for village women in management skills relevant to income generating and self-employment activities at the village level and (2) design, and complete in 30 thanas a basic course on management skills for 50,000 village women entrepreneurs and selected women for advanced training. These objectives have been followed up with the provision of credit for women and the formation of village Development Committees. 16,584 women beneficiaries invested Tk. 1,40,40,600/- from their family savings for undertaking income-generating activities. The recovery rate of the bank loans was 95% and from the samities, 100%. The training programme has contributed to increased awareness and greater confidence among the

project beneficiaries.

#### 2. National Literacy Programme

Under this project particular attention is being paid to making the curriculum gender sensitive, taking account of the time availability of rural women and promoting women teachers. 100 NGOs have been supported to establish 15 Adult Literacy Centres in which 50% of the learners are to be women. The pilot programme began in September 1993 and is an interesting initiative where GOB and NGOs are collaborating to provide the poorest of the poor and women with literacy courses. At the end of a 12 month period, the programme should have reached 22,500 women at minimum.

#### 3. Training and Employment in Garment Industries

This project through the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training at the Bangla-German Technical Training Centre (TTC). The main objective of the project is to establish at the TTC, the institutional capacity for (1) training of supervisors of garment industries and trainers in six basic skills (pattern making, cutting/marketing, sewing machine mechanics, management, sewing machine operation and supervision); and (2) the organisation and conducting of basic courses for workers entering the industry as well as upgrading courses for those already employed of whom 50% will be women. At present, while the majority of the work force in the industry is female, there are still only a few women at the supervisory level. It is hoped that, through these training courses, this imbalance can be gradually corrected.



### Message

I am glad to learn that the United Nations System of Organisations in Bangladesh is bringing out special supplements in newspapers on the occasion of the United Nations Day on October 24.

I am particularly happy that "Women in Development" has been chosen as the theme of this year's UN Day observance in Bangladesh. This has been very appropriate in the context of our Government's endeavour to improve the condition of womenfolk in Bangladesh and ensure their active involvement in national development efforts. The UN Organisations, I believe, would continue to provide co-operation and assistance to our programmes in this field. I wish the venture all success.

**Khaleida Zia**  
Prime Minister  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

### United Nations Industrial Development Organization

It is now fully recognized that industrialization is a dynamic instrument of growth essential for rapid economic and social development and is a prime requirement for the improvement of living standards and the quality of life of peoples in developing countries. The promotion and acceleration of industrial development in developing countries as well as fostering cooperation on global, regional as well as sub-sectoral levels towards this end is the primary objective of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). As the central coordinating agency for industrial activities within the United Nations system, UNIDO offers developing countries a wide variety of projects and programmes. Technical cooperation projects make up the bulk of its activities but equally dynamic and of increasing importance are support programmes in investment promotion, information exchange, training and research. Accordingly, the priorities constituting the current medium term plan of the organization comprise human resource development, development and transfer of technology, industrial rehabilitation and modernization, small and medium scale industry, environment and energy, mobilization of financial resources, economic cooperation amongst developing countries including sub-regional industrial cooperation and equally importantly, integration of women in

industrial development. UNIDO's commitment to integration of women in industrial development is a deliberate policy aim. After UNIDO became a specialized agency in 1966, a separate unit in UNIDO Headquarters was charged with the responsibility of developing, promoting, coordinating and monitoring activities within UNIDO that affect women at all levels and sectors of industry. There has been, in recent times, a dramatic surge in the number of women engaged in various forms of industrial activities whether as self-taught food processors or small scale entrepreneurs or as skilled computer technicians, accomplished administrator and senior industrial managers. The vast majority of women in industry is concentrated in a narrow range of light industrial occupations such as electronics, food processing and textiles.

In Bangladesh, the textile sector is particularly significant from the point of view of employment of women in industry. The readymade garments industry employs currently between 8 and 9 lac people most of whom are women. Additionally, the handloom sector accounts for more than one quarter of all manufacturing employment in the country and is characterized by a preponderance of women, often operating from or near their households. While the readymade garments sector is an increasingly important segment of Bangladeshi industry currently contributing almost 60

percent of its export revenues, the handloom sector is equally important, though in a different way, catering mainly to domestic market and accounting for over two thirds of the total cloth supply of the country. UNIDO has been active in the textile sector of Bangladesh in a number of ways. It has provided technical assistance for productivity improvements at the enterprise level and also assisted in the establishment of the Textile Industry Development Centre for advancing the technical and technological levels of the industry with a view to improve profitability and international competitiveness. UNIDO also carried out a study of the implications of the introduction of new technologies in ready made garments sector in order to provide possible scenarios that might impact on employment of women and the need for training and choice of technology. Technical assistance has also been offered to study the requirements for backward linkages of the sector so as to reduce vulnerability and provide durability to sustained growth of an industry with high rates of women employment. Possible technical assistance interventions in the handloom sector are also being actively considered. It may be mentioned that the bulk of technical assistance activities of UNIDO in Bangladesh are rendered within the framework of UNDP financing. As additional employment prospects in agriculture are limited and jobs in the manufacturing sector are restructured, women's presence in the informal economy becomes even more marked. This is an area in which UNIDO provides much technical assistance in a wide range of developing countries. The task is essentially to improve the efficiency of micro industries, a large proportion of which is operated by women. The programmes cover skill upgradation, some technical and managerial training, access to credit, delivery of appropriate technology and marketing assistance. A major UNDP sub-regional programme on entrepreneurial development through small industry using rural funding mechanisms is currently being formulated with active UNIDO assistance under the leadership of Bangladesh and for application to the countries of the sub-region. UNIDO is currently discussing a supportive training programme in Bangladesh for women entrepreneurs in the food processing industry. While traditional entrepreneurship development programmes aim at stimulating entrepreneurial characteristics and management skills, the UNIDO training programme combines such entrepreneurial training with technical aspects of production and thus aims to provide women entrepreneurs with the entrepreneurial awareness, management skills and technical knowledge necessary for them to run small scale enterprises in the food processing sector. UNIDO is actively engaged in developing sub-sectoral programmes with the Government of Bangladesh in a number of labour intensive manufacturing sectors with export potential, most of which would significantly enlarge the opportunities for the employment of women in industry.

On this United Nations Day 1993 it is clear that the world Organization has begun a new chapter. In sharp contrast to past decades the vast potential of the United Nations has been recognized. For international peace and security, for humanitarian assistance, for development in all aspects, for the protection of the planet, for the promotion of democracy and human rights, the United Nations is indispensable. In this recognition, Member States have placed more responsibility upon the United Nations than at any time in its history. These new requirements cannot be expected to succeed in the absence of new foundations of support.

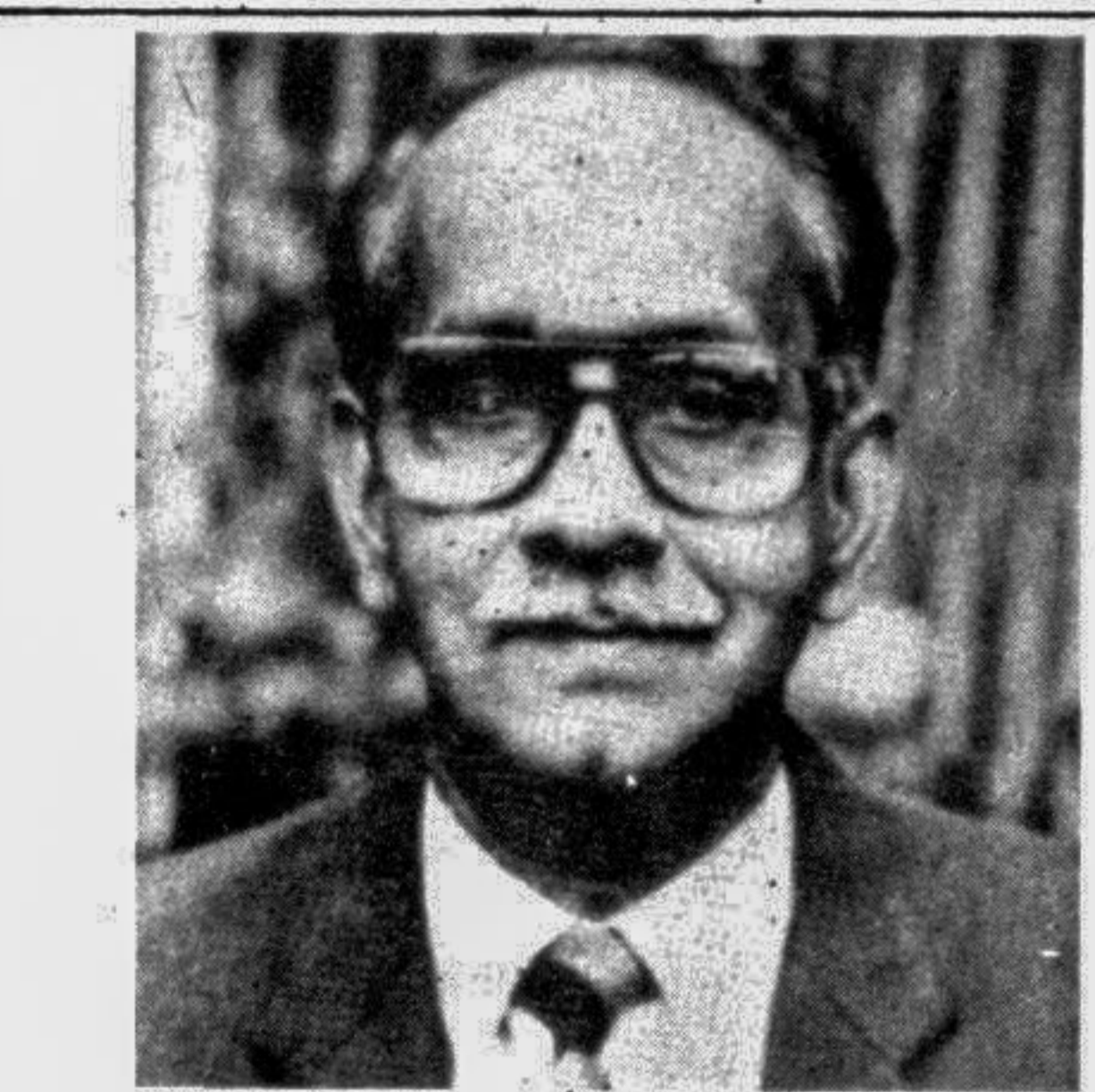


### MESSAGE

This means that Member States must: provide adequate levels of resources, recognize the changed character of conflict today, realize that the UN can serve, but not substitute for, the concerns of its Members, and understand that peace and security must rest

upon a foundation of economic and social development. The successes of the past year outweigh the setbacks. The year to come will reveal whether the international community is ready for the serious challenges and positive opportunities which now lie before it.

**Mr. Boutros-Boutros Ghali**  
Secretary General  
United Nations



### MESSAGE

It is a matter of great encouragement and optimism that the UN Organisations in Bangladesh have taken the initiative to bring out this supplement of "Women in Development" on the occasion of the United Nations Day this year. I felicitate them on this timely gesture to sensitize and raise consciousness on this vital issue of concern, for all, and wish to reiterate that the Government of Bangladesh is fully committed towards any endeavour undertaken by the UN for the development of women at all times. Today, Seventeen Ministries and Divisions have been assigned as focal points for Women in Development (WID) programmes under the overall supervision of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. A National Council for Women's Development (NCWD) to be headed by the Prime Minister is also in the process of being formed. The NCWD will be responsible for monitoring the activities of the national agencies concerned with women's development issues. Bangladesh's commitment and active involvement in ameliorating the condition of women bears recognition in its election to such international bodies as the Commission on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Commission on the Status of Women and the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh under Begum Khaleida Zia will ceaselessly strive for realizing women's rights and do their best to ensure their rightful place under the sun. A. S. M. Mostafizur Rahman  
Foreign Minister  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

### Message



The Secretary General's message for United Nations Day 1993 is about change, the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the world, and therefore, a need for a new United Nations. That is why we, the agencies of the United Nations system in Bangladesh, are focussing on this occasion on the issue of Women in Development, which we consider most fundamental to bringing about change in Bangladesh. National and international initiatives since the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985) have raised the consciousness of the world community on the importance of women's needs and concerns in the global development agenda. Why is improvement in the situation and status of women fundamental to development? It is because without addressing the issues of women's education, well-being and status, many societal goals cannot be achieved. For instance, many studies have shown that women's

education has the greatest impact on improving health and nutrition of families as well as on family planning. A strong and positive association between political and civil liberties and women's education has also been demonstrated. Enhancing women's income has a direct impact on the well being of families because women generally use their income for household purposes while men's spending is geared more towards personal consumption. Active participation of women, not just as beneficiaries but as equal partners in development, have resulted in successful programmes in environmental management, drinking water supply, low-cost housing and so forth. There are many examples in Bangladesh where poor women, given the opportunity, have successfully organized for mutually support and income-generating activities and have proven themselves to be excellent credit risks. The need, then, is to inform, enable and empower women to become key actors in the development process. UN agencies are encouraged by the leadership shown by H.E. the Prime Minister and the Government of Bangladesh on the issue of women in development, to which we give our whole hearted support.

**Elnzi Watanabe**  
Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System's Operational Activities For Development in Bangladesh

### UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRE (UNIC) IN DHAKA

The United Nations cannot achieve the purposes for which it has been created unless the peoples of the world are fully informed of its aims and activities. This statement is as valid today as it was 47 years ago when the General Assembly of the United Nations set out the terms of reference for the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in resolution 13 of 1946. In order to ensure that people in all parts of the world, receive as full information as possible about the United Nations, the "branch offices" of the UN were established. The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Dhaka, is one of those branch offices of DPI. Established on 15 August 1981, UNIC is the

principal local source of public information about the UN system. It acts as an active link between the Organisations, and local media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and provides up-to-date public information materials on the aims and activities of the United Nations in political, economic, social and humanitarian fields. Its role is dynamic and creative, and its aim is to capture the attention of the local audience. As we all know we are living at a time of dramatic changes due to great global, social and economic upheaval. Democracy and human rights have scored significant gains

throughout the globe. But these transformations of the political, social and economic landscape have yet to have a positive impact on the many millions of women who live in abject poverty. A majority of these women are farmers, producers and traders in the informal sector enabling them to subsist in countries where women's opportunities for wage employment are negligible. The World's Women: Trends and Statistics 1970-1990 published by the United Nations presents the most complete depiction so far of women's conditions and contributions across the world. It confirms what we have for years suspected, that women are the majority of the poor. They work the longest

hours, they earn the lowest pay and receive the fewest benefits. In developing countries women are now working 60-90 hours a week just to maintain their meagre living standard. It also shows that women are the majority of the poor and the number of women living in rural poverty has increased by 50 percent since 1975. They are the majority of the world's illiterate, the number rose from 543 million to 597 million between 1970 to 1985. Women in Asia and Africa work 13 hours a week more than men and are mostly unpaid, earn 30 to 40 percent less than men for doing equal work. Women hold between 10

to 20 percent of managerial and administrative jobs worldwide. The cause of the women is gradually becoming one of the most special field of attention for the United Nations as a whole. The concern is evident in its convening of the Forth World Conference on Women, scheduled to be held in 1995, which will examine the gains and/or setbacks for women in

the decade since the Nairobi Conference in 1985. This Conference will also review the agenda for women to the year 2000 and beyond. The end of Cold war and a stampede towards multi-party democracy raised expectations of a peace dividend for development. But without the active participation and equal