

UNICEF and Women in Development

Most of UNICEF-supported programmes in Bangladesh focus on women and children.

management, group dynamics, leadership development, community



Photo credit: Shehzad Noorani

In fact, UNICEF has been instrumental in advocating for the "mainstreaming" of women in development (WID) in the development process. It is UNICEF's belief that women's issues should not be dealt with as a sector or they will become welfare-oriented and marginalized. Instead, a multi-sectoral approach is needed. UNICEF took active part towards inclusion of a macro chapter on WID and to bring about the present status of women's issues in the Fourth Five Year Plan which calls for mainstreaming women in economic activities; raising the productive capability of women; greater participation in development activities and decision-making processes; raising women's skills and literacy through non-formal and institutional education; and ensuring overall survival, family health services and nutrition for women and children.

UNICEF has played an active role in designating 25 WID focal points in the sectoral ministries, developing the terms of reference for them and strengthening the Coordination Committee which has been set up in the Ministry of Women's Affairs to operationalize the objectives for women in the Fourth Five Year Plan.

UNICEF has been involved in activities for poor women and children through the Government's own community-based service programmes and through NGOs. Through the Grameen Bank, UNICEF has assisted thousands of landless women to be trained in income generation and credit

participation and functional education in child survival and development issues and women's health and nutrition. Grameen members have been linked with national basic services, particularly with EPI outreach. UNICEF is presently supporting a "Women's Health and Development Programme" through the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) which has similar linkages with the national system.

The other main activity UNICEF is well-known for in Bangladesh is advocacy, social mobilization and programme communication. Extensive advocacy on women's issues has been carried by UNICEF and its partners in government and non-government bodies. UNICEF has been instrumental in mobilizing various sectors of society on WID issues, including a donor's from a national network and grass-roots NGOs. UNICEF has begun the process of gender responsive programming in all the related social development sectors. A series of gender and Development training courses have been held for the UN, UNICEF staff and their Government counterparts. Programmes such as the new national thrust in social mobilization for sanitation are gradually becoming more responsive to women's practical needs and strategic interest. The main mobilizers for sustaining and increasing EPI coverage have become community women, mothers of fully immunized children.

Since 1988, gender issues received increased attention in all programme sectors.

Throughout the South Asian region, UNICEF offices advocated for making the 1990s the Decade of the Girl Child and have helped to foster specific programmes. The Decade Action Plan for the Girl Child in Bangladesh was launched by the Finance Minister in September this year. The Ministry of Social Welfare is the lead agency in coordinating the inter-sectoral activities relating to the plan.

The Meena Communication Initiative is another example of UNICEF's thrust in using modern communication tools and channels for advocacy, social mobilization and programme communication. Meena, the delightful character of a series of animated films is fast becoming an uplifting symbol for Girl Child development in the South Asian region. The first episode on school enrollment is being distributed widely through television, video sales, mobile cinema and cinema chains. The Meena comic book on the same episode is reaching all primary schools of Bangladesh.



(Meena Character-insert here)

Plans are evolving for the popularization of the Meena concept through many more educational materials and products. And new episodes of the series are under production: equal nutrition, early marriage, son preference, dowry and safe motherhood. These and other episodes on subjects such as diarrhoea management, water and sanitation, community health, children in especially difficult circumstances, and HIV/AIDS will all have as their basic theme the life skills of the Girl Child: self assessment, communication, coping with emotions and stress, critical thinking, conflict resolution and management, negotiating skills, problem solving and decision making. In this way UNICEF is fostering concepts which are at the basis of development itself.

The UN Day: 24 October 1993- WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) constituted on 7 April 1948, is one of the oldest UN bodies in existence. It is an independent Organization, with its own guiding Assembly, its highly decentralized regional structure, its own funds, devoted to health and health related issues, but belonging to the family of the United Nations. The work of the Organization is geographically divided into six regions. Bangladesh joined the South-East Asia Region of World Health Organization in 1972 a year after its independence.

The World Health Assembly in 1977 adopted the global goal of Health for All by the year 2000 as the main Social target for its member states. This was a landmark in the annals of international health development and it also implies that by the end of this century, people throughout the world will have access to health knowledge, care and services which will enable them to lead a socially and economically productive life.

WHO is the Organization whose "neutral umbrella" makes it politically possible for countries of differing economic status and ideological outlook to collectively combat the scourges of grave diseases affecting humanity. An example is smallpox, whose eradication has saved millions of lives and done away with the enormous financial burden of vaccination and surveillance. Now encouraged by the progress made in the Leprosy Control Programme throughout the world since the introduction of Mass Drug Therapy, the Organization has intensified its activities in this area with a view to eliminating leprosy as a public health problem by 2000 AD.

The Organization has also helped develop the "cold chain" and other basic strategies of universal childhood immunization; the Organization that has promoted the use of oral rehydration therapy to prevent not only the few well-publicized deaths from cholera but the countless deaths from ordinary diarrhoeal diseases; a very crucial area in the context of the Bangladesh scenario.

The WHO collaborative programmes in Bangladesh are planned, executed and monitored by a joint Government/WHO Coordination Committee keeping in view the national health policies and the WHO global strategies. The main thrust has been on the intensified Primary Health

Care approach and the District Health System, which has received approximately 30% of the total budget. This programme was expanded from 8 thanas to 54 thanas in 8 districts within the 4 divisions. WHO also places great emphasis on the overall development of the managerial process of the health system. The other areas receiving attention are overall human resources development in health, Maternal and Child Health, Expanded Programme on Immunization, Nutrition, Control of Communicable Diseases, such as Malaria, Tuberculosis, Leprosy, Quality Control of Drugs & Vaccines, Laboratory Strengthening, Rehabilitation of the Disabled, Accident Prevention, etc. Another key priority area is Community Water Supply and Sanitation. WHO is also actively involved in disaster preparedness and response in the health sector in Bangladesh. WHO emphasizes preparedness rather than response. Emerging problems such as Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and AIDS are also given priority attention.

The Fourth Population & Health Project beginning in 1992 has an allocation of approximately US\$ 601 million. WHO is acting as an executing agency in most of the health components of this project.

The launching of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985) marked the beginning of WHO's response to the integration of women in the development process through the activities of the programme on Women, Health and Development (WHD). Resolutions adopted at various World Health Assemblies and Regional Committees pertaining to WHD have further strengthened the promotion of Women's perspective in WHO collaborative programmes. A Global Commission on Women's Health has been initiated at WHO/HQ through an interdivisional working group. The objective of WHD in South-East Asia Region is to raise the health status of women, and enhance their participation in health provision, health promotion, and health development within the context of the goal of health for All and the PHC approach and strictly within the principles of social equity and justice. At country level a WHD national focal point has been identified, and collaboration and coordination with Governmental and non-Governmental agencies have been intensified.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees

As long as there have been wars and persecution, there have been refugees.

Refugees are of very race and religion. They are found in every part of the world.

Forced to flee out of fear for their lives, refugees give up everything, their home and belongings, their family and country, for uncertain futures in strange lands.

Their plight is one of the great tragedies of our time. Their fate is linked to political and human rights questions that are of concern to each of us.

Who are today's refugees? More often than not, she is a woman. And she is frightened and alone. There are 19 million refugees and another 20 million displaced persons in the world today. Of these, more than 80 percent are women and children.

Fate often delivers multiple punishments to refugee women, especially those whose husbands or fathers are dead or missing. The disintegration of families leaves women and girls particularly vulnerable to intimidation and sexual abuse.

Refugee women may be single-handedly responsible for the survival of their children when they are least able to bear such a burden alone and when their own survival is at stake.

Every day is a challenge. The refugee woman starts her

day lining up for water in a dusty camp. When her jerry cans are full, she must carry the heavy containers back to her shelter. It is the woman who then walks miles to gather a few twigs to cook the unfamiliar ingredients that make up the basic food rations for her hungry family. It is the woman who stays around the clock at intensive feeding centers while doctors administer small liquid meals every three hours to her severely malnourished children. And when the refugee woman become ill, as she invariably does, she is unlikely to seek medical attention. Who would care for her children in her absence?

Her problems are many; her options are almost non-existent.

Refugee women face violence at every stage of their flight. While fleeing a war zone alone, they risk rape by soldiers or guerrillas.

On arrival in refugee camps, they sometimes are raped or intimidated by camp and security personnel.

Sadly, women are also at risk because exile deprives their husbands of their traditional roles. Humiliated and bored, some men abuse their wives and children out of frustration.

Women of child-bearing age are more likely than men to be malnourished. Pregnant women and nursing mothers suffer most from iron, calcium and other nutrient deficiencies. The distribution of food to male heads of households is at odds with

The ILO and the World of Work

The ILO was founded under the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 to advance the cause of social justice and, by so doing, to contribute to ensuring universal and lasting peace. In 1947, the ILO became the first specialized agency associated with the United Nations. Its activity in the search of peace was recognized in 1969 by the award of the Nobel peace prize on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary.

A main characteristic of the ILO is its tripartite structure. Indeed, the ILO is the only universal organization where representatives of employers' and workers' organisations participate in decision-making on an equal footing with government representatives.

Standard setting and supervision and technical cooperation together with research and information-form the basis of ILO action. A main function which has continued over the years, is to improve the economic and social conditions of workers throughout the world by building up a code of International Labour Standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations relating in particular to basic human rights, employment and training policy, conditions of work, social security, industrial relations and many other social matters. While Conventions are international treaties, open to ratification by Member States, Recommendations do not require ratification. They mainly serve as guidelines for national policy in given fields.

The ILO technical cooperation programme mainly supports the implementation of labour standards. It provides a major means of action aimed at assisting developing countries, at different social and economic stages and of bringing about development understood as a combination of social justice and economic progress. Assistance is provided in particular in such

fields as vocational training, management development, manpower planning, development of cooperatives, industrial relations, social security, occupational safety and health, workers' education. In Bangladesh, the ILO is implementing a country programme, focusing on assistance to its constituents, either individually or in a tripartite setting in many of the above field. It is designed to improve labour relations and to provide policy in all fields of ILO's core mandate. As a major pillar, the ILO is responsible, together with its development partners for implementing seven national and ten regional and inter-regional projects.

Women in the Working World

Since its creation the ILO's promotion of the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment between men and women has been a fundamental objective of the organisation. Among the several ILO standards directly concerning women workers, three conventions are specifically designed to eliminate discrimination against them. In 1951 the International Labour Conference adopted Convention (No.100) and Recommendation (No.90) which deal specifically with equal remuneration for work of equal value for men and women workers. Equality of opportunity and treatment of men and women in employment and occupation is the main theme of the two instruments adopted in 1958, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No.111) and Recommendation (No. 111). Convention No.111 requests governments to declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation with a view to eliminating any discrimination in respect thereof. Furthermore, one of

the obstacles for equality being the family responsibilities which still lie more frequently upon women, the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No.156) adopted in 1981 and its corresponding Recommendation (No.165) was adopted in 1981.

In 1985, following the UN Decade for women (1976-1985), the International Labour Conference adopted a Resolution on equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women to strengthen measures to promote the employment of women as an integral part of national policies and national development to achieve full, productive and freely chosen employment. This resolution was followed in 1987 by a Plan of Action elaborated to ensure that issues relating to equality of opportunity and treatment were systematically included at each stage of policy formulation, planning and implementation of all ILO programmes and projects.

The integration of women issues in all its activities is of great concern also for ILO Dhaka. At present a women-specific project on "Technologies for rural employment with special reference to women" is being implemented. At the same time special attention is paid to respect Gender issues as much as possible in all other projects. For example, the ILO has a project for "Training and employment in garment industries" which has a large percentage of women participants. The ILO is also planning to develop specific WID activities within the framework of its project "Assistance to National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute for Vocational Training in Tourism Occupations". Further to this, a mission of an ILO Adviser on women issues is scheduled before the end of the year with a view to developing a comprehensive strategy for Women's Employment issues in Bangladesh.

WFP UN Day 1993

World Food Programme (WFP), the food aid organization of the United Nations System, has supported the poverty alleviation programmes of the Government of Bangladesh since 1974. The annual value of the vulnerable Groups Development (VGD) and Food for Work (FFW) programmes is Tk. 448 crore (US\$ 113 million). The VGD programme aims to develop the self-reliance of 450,000 of the poorest women. The FFW programme supports infrastructure development and provides seasonal employment to around 3 million labourers.

Now They Call Me Doctor.

Banesa's life changed after she joined the "Vulnerable Groups Development Project: Self Reliance for Poor Women"-a women's project which has increased her income and brought many other changes to her life. Banesa has come a long way from absolute poverty to being a "poultry doctor". But her life is still hard: with three children and a sick husband, the family would go hungry if it were not for her new skills. The project combines food aid with savings, credit and training in poultry care. It is a unique partnership. An NGO,

the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) does the training and manages the credit scheme; the Government supplies chicks and vaccines; and the World Food Programme (WFP) provides credit and food aid for the women. Pooling their resources, the three partners reach more women more effectively. This is one of the largest development projects for women in Bangladesh. In the 4 years since 1988 the project reached 100,000 women and a further 246,000 women are being trained between 1992-1996. The women in the project

belong to the poorest three percent of the population. More than half of them are heads of household and lack even a homestead plot. They are lucky if they eat two skimpy meals a day and many eat only what is left over after they have fed their husbands and children. They have no access to education or credit. But they do have something: a relentless will to improve their lives.

A Break With Tradition
BRAC extension workers train the women for two years in the different stages of rearing poultry. During this time each woman receives from WFP a monthly ration of 31 kilograms of wheat.

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development of women those hopes will never come to fruition. It is however heartening to note that beneath the gloom cast by the global recession, there are encouraging signs that the concepts of Women in Development (WID) and Women, Environment and Development (WED) are gaining acceptance in some policy making circles all over the world.

traditional patterns in which women play the key role in the handling of food.



When refugee women are empowered to take part in planning and implementing the delivery of assistance, everybody benefits. Unfortunately, women are often excluded from having a say in running their lives as refugees. Refugee women should be allowed access to education, social services, special medical care and

should be given an opportunity to acquire skills while in exile. The absence of these options perpetuates their suffering and in some instances, forces them to become refugees again. Women should be given a chance to determine their own futures.

In 1992, thanks to the generosity of the people of Bangladesh, some 250,000 Muslim refugees who fled Myanmar's Rakhine state received temporary asylum in the Cox's Bazar area. While much has been accomplished and the repatriation of these refugees progresses, their needs, particularly those of women, continue to pose a major challenge to the government. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and private voluntary organisations

UNHCR has a mandate to protect and care for refugees throughout the world. It can play no favorites. But UNHCR recognizes that refugee women have special needs which are not always met.



The wheat improves the family's diet and provides additional income. More importantly, it gives the women the opportunity to plan beyond daily survival. One group is formed per village and each woman has a different role in the group. Once the training ends, refresher courses take place once a month. Here, women talk about poultry, but also discuss health, their children's education and their lives in general.

One member specializes in raising chicks bought from the Government supply. When the chicks are two months old, they are sold to other women, who raise up to 15 hens and one cock for both eggs and meat.

Another member of the groups trains as a poultry doctor-like Banesa. New-castle's disease often ravages poultry in Bangladesh, so keeping poultry deaths low makes this a good investment. Other women collect and sell the eggs in the market for a small fee. In this way the

Women in Development (WID) Initiatives of the World Bank

Introduction

Majority of the women in Bangladesh are not only poor but are trapped between two worlds, one determined by the culture and tradition which confine their activities in the household and the other shaped by the increasing landlessness and poverty that forces them outside in the wage and labor market for economic survival. Data on women's nutritional and health status, education, bargaining power within the labor market consistently indicate gender disparity in terms of economic opportunities. The most vulnerable category within the rural society is the female headed household. The government policy strongly advocates bringing women into the mainstream of economic and social development. IDA fully endorses this policy. The Bank's strategic considerations and directions for its WID activities are defined in the Country Study entitled **Strategies for Enhancing the Role of Women in Development**, which was published in July 1990. These are: (a) women already contribute far more to the economy and to the family than is generally reflected in official labor statistics; recognizing the role of women in the development process will help policy makers in making informed decisions on resource allocation; (b) although women's contribution is substantial, their productivity is low because of cultural and institutional barriers; removal of these constraints could lead to productivity increases and ultimately household income increases; and (c) investments in women can broaden the returns to economic development; because women play a critical role in their family's health and nutrition and in the education of their children,

the benefits from investments in women's development will be diffused throughout society and across generations. On this basis, concrete steps to be taken in the Bank's economic and sector work and lending programs to facilitate Bangladeshi women's contribution to the development and to enhance their share in the benefits of the development process are defined in the **WID Action Plan**, which is being implemented. The Bank annually discusses WID issues in a Local Consultation Group Meeting which is attended by donor and government representatives.

Lending Programs.
Promising WID initiatives identified through its sector work program are being followed up in the Bank's lending program. In the education sector, the General Education Project (GEP) and the Female Secondary School Assistance (FSSAP) projects promotion of the girl child's education through specific attention on increasing enrollment and attendance of girls in the primary and secondary schools. The GEP supported and the government already implemented the policy of recruitment of 60% females as teachers in the primary schools. About 200 satellite schools and 2200 non-formal primary schools are mandated to recruit only female teachers from the community who also work with the mothers as change-agents. The number of satellite schools are expected to increase to 1200 by the end of this year. The project has supported the development of a gender-neutral curriculum which has been introduced in Class I and II. GEP has promoted the establishment of a WID unit in the National Curriculum and Text book Board to focus on the needs of the girl child. The FSSAP provides for stipends and occupational skills training

for girls in the secondary schools. In the health and population sector, women and children are the main beneficiaries of improved service delivery in the Bank and other cofinanciers' Fourth Population and Health Project the project seeks to reduce maternal mortality from 6-8 to 4-4 per thousand live births. In addition the project seeks to enhance the nutritional status of women and children. Over 30,000 female field workers have been deployed at the union level and below to improve health conditions and motivate communities to accept family planning methods. The project also supports women's skill training and provides credit facilities for income generating programs in 220 thanas. In the agriculture sector, the recently concluded Rural Development II Project and the on-going Agricultural Support Services, Third Fisheries, Forestry Resources Management and Systems Rehabilitation Projects specific strategies have been adopted to reach the project services relating to extension services, training and creation of employment opportunities to women.

Conclusion.
The concentrated work on WID issues both within the Bank and in Bangladesh and the current convergence of Government and donor interests in promoting the welfare and status of Bangladeshi women have provided the Bank with a good foundation for identifying and developing WID activities as part of its sector work and lending program. In addition to the list presented above the Bank is working towards expanding its assistance in credit, agriculture research, industry and infrastructure projects to support the Government's priority objectives of enhancing women's involvement in the development process.