

UNFPA BANGLADESH

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





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FOREWORD

It is my great pleasure to present the 2024 Annual Report of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Bangladesh. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our government partners, development partners, UN sister agencies, implementing partners, and members of the UNFPA Bangladesh team for their contributions to a year of impactful work.

In 2024, our progress unfolded amidst complexity, and was made all the more meaningful because of it. While Bangladesh's health system, capacities, and frontline services were put to the test, we, as partners, are proud to report: they held strong – through humanitarian crises, climate disasters, and political uncertainties.

UNFPA-supported midwives safely delivered over 154,000 babies. More than 384,000 women and girls accessed protection services against gender-based violence. Legislative breakthroughs achieved progress toward criminalising domestic violence and strengthening protection against sexual harassment. And the largest national survey on violence against women measured a crisis hidden in plain sight.

We have every reason to be hopeful about the future, and this report shows why – from women overcoming debilitating childbirth injuries and midwives providing life-saving care, to girls thriving in classrooms and frontline workers refusing to let services falter even when the odds are

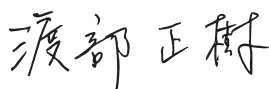
stacked against them. Together with our partners, we are working every day to change these odds, and build a future where every childbirth is safe, every pregnancy is wanted, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

The challenge ahead is to ensure our interventions reach everyone so that no community remains too peripheral. This means doing more – and doing better – to engage, protect, and empower young people, women with disabilities, refugees, gender-diverse populations, indigenous and other marginalised groups, climate-affected communities, and those on the other side of the digital divide.

The good news is, with advancements in medical systems, decades of programme experience and technical leadership, and an unprecedented wealth of data and technology at our disposal, we know what works. In fact, together, we have never been more capable of facing the challenges confronting us. We simply need increased investment, stronger partnerships, and a greater commitment to forward-looking approaches to scale the stories of transformation we see on the ground every day.

Thirty years on from the historic agenda set by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, its vision of rights and choices for all remains strong in Bangladesh, where people are collectively defining today what equality means to them.

We stand ready to support them on this journey.



Masaki Watabe

Representative a.i., UNFPA Bangladesh

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- CLSE: Comprehensive Life Skills Education
- CP10: Tenth Country Programme
- DMPA-SC: Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate – Subcutaneous
- DWA: Department of Women Affairs
- GBV: Gender-Based Violence
- GIS: Geographic Information System
- ICPD: International Conference on Population and Development
- IUD: Intrauterine Device
- MISP: Minimum Initial Service Package for Sexual and
- MPDSR: Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response
- MHPSS: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
- MoHFW: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
- OCC: One-stop Crisis Centre
- PPFP: Postpartum Family Planning
- SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals
- SOP: Standard Operating Procedure
- SRH: Sexual and Reproductive Health
- SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- STI: Sexually Transmitted Infection
- UN: United Nations
- UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund
- UPR: Universal Periodic Review

TOWARDS THREE TRANSFORMATIVE RESULTS

**Zero
unmet need for
family planning**

**Zero
preventable
maternal death**

**Zero
gender-based
violence
and harmful
practices**

As the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, UNFPA works to deliver three transformative results by 2030: zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices. These results are transformative both in their grounding in human rights and social justice, and in their demonstrated potential to uplift communities and countries around the world.

With these goals, UNFPA Bangladesh, established in 1974, is working in 22 targeted districts across all eight divisions under its 10th Country Programme. We also support critical humanitarian operations across the Rohingya refugee camps and host communities in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, focusing especially on women, adolescent girls, and young people. We strive to uphold the bold vision for humanity laid out in the ICPD Programme of Action and drive progress toward reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our commitment is to reach those furthest behind – through systems and solutions that work for all and are empowering by design.

2024: A PIVOTAL YEAR

2024 was a year of milestones. It marked three decades since the world agreed on a visionary consensus at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD): placing sexual and reproductive health and rights at the heart of development. It was also the year both the United Nations and UNFPA celebrated its 50-year partnership with the people of Bangladesh, bound together in a pursuit of rights and choices: the right to a safe birth; protection from violence; representation in data that captures the human experience beyond aggregates; and the freedom to choose when, whether and with whom to start a family and, therefore, build a future.

While political transition, climate shocks, and humanitarian challenges were very much part of the story, this year was ultimately defined by action and innovation. Our collaboration with government systems, local partners on the ground, and the people themselves, delivered throughout 2024.

Impact in numbers



154,000

newborns safely delivered by UNFPA-supported midwives.



216,000

people accessed sexual and reproductive health services in Rohingya camps and host communities.



500

new midwife positions established across medical colleges and district hospitals.



27,000

women surveyed for Bangladesh's largest Violence Against Women prevalence survey.



275,000

women screened for cervical cancer; with timely care ensured for 10,000+ diagnosed.



300,000

women engaged in community dialogues to promote adolescent girls' empowerment and prevent child marriage.



116

women received life-restoring obstetric fistula surgery.



44,000

adolescents reached with Comprehensive Life Skills Education across nearly 1,100 schools and madrasahs.



28,000

at-risk adolescent girls equipped with life skills.



279

grassroots NGOs capacitated to prevent and respond to child marriage.



384,000

women and girls accessed gender-based violence prevention and response services in Rohingya refugee camps and host communities.



534,000

community members engaged in dialogues promoting positive social and gender norms in Rohingya camps and host communities.



672,000

individuals, including 22,019 persons with disabilities, reached through awareness sessions to prevent gender-based violence in Rohingya camps and Bhasan Char.



184,000

disaster-affected women and girls received dignity kits, menstrual health supplies, psychosocial support, and emergency cash and voucher assistance.



2,300

pregnant women received emergency cash support during climate crises.

*Figures in this section are adjusted downward and rounded to the nearest significant whole number, for clarity and ease of reading.

PROGRAMMATIC COVERAGE 2024

CP10 Priority Districts

Kurigram, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Chapai Nawabganj, Jamalpur, Netrokona, Sherpur, Kishoreganj, Dhaka, Sunamganj, Pirojpur, Jhalkhati, Patuakhali, Barguna, Bagerhat, Chandpur, Noakhali, Bhola, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar



Adolescents and Youth Empowerment

Bagerhat, Chapainawabganj, Cox's Bazar, Jamalpur, Sirajganj, Noakhali



SRHR Programme Districts

Noakhali, Sunamganj, Chandpur, Bandarban, Gaibandha, Cox's Bazar, Bagerhat, Jamalpur, Kurigram, Bhola, Khagrachari, Rangamati, Sirajganj, Patuakhali, Barguna, Feni, Satkhira, Chapainawabganj



Rohingya Humanitarian Response

Cox's Bazar, Bhasan Char (Noakhali)



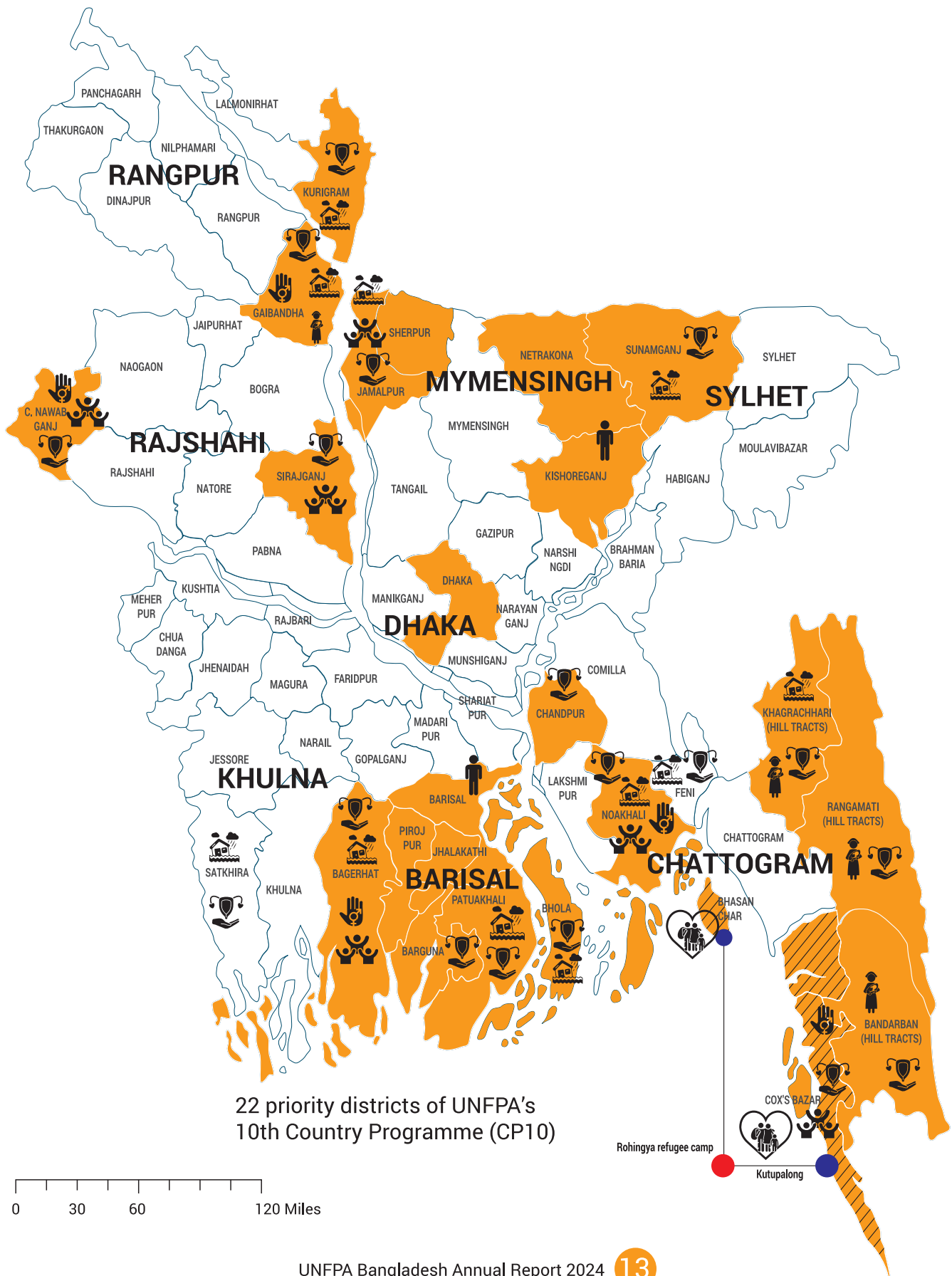
Gender-based Violence (GBV)

Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Gaibandha, Chapainawabganj, Bagerhat



Climate Change and Disaster Response

Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Kurigram, Bhola, Bagerhat, Sunamganj, Satkhira, Patuakhali, Noakhali, Khagrachari, Feni



ICPD30: DHAKA HOSTS GLOBAL DIALOGUE ON DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In this era of megatrends and polycrises: climate change is forcing more people from their homes, cities are growing rapidly, and technology is reshaping our daily lives. Record levels of conflicts are escalating threats to human rights, particularly for women and girls. At the same time, the world's population is the largest it has ever been, with a rapid demographic trend towards ageing. Despite these complex transitions, UNFPA defines this moment as one of 'infinite possibilities.'



It is against this backdrop that UNFPA, along with the governments of Bangladesh, Bulgaria, and Japan, hosted the Global Dialogue on Demographic Diversity and Sustainable Development at Dhaka in 2024, held just after member states reaffirmed their commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action at the 57th session of the Commission on Population and Development. More than 200 leaders from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector came together to address the rapidly changing population landscape. The dialogue ended with a reaffirmation of UNFPA's call to put people and rights at the heart of driving demographic shifts toward sustainable development.



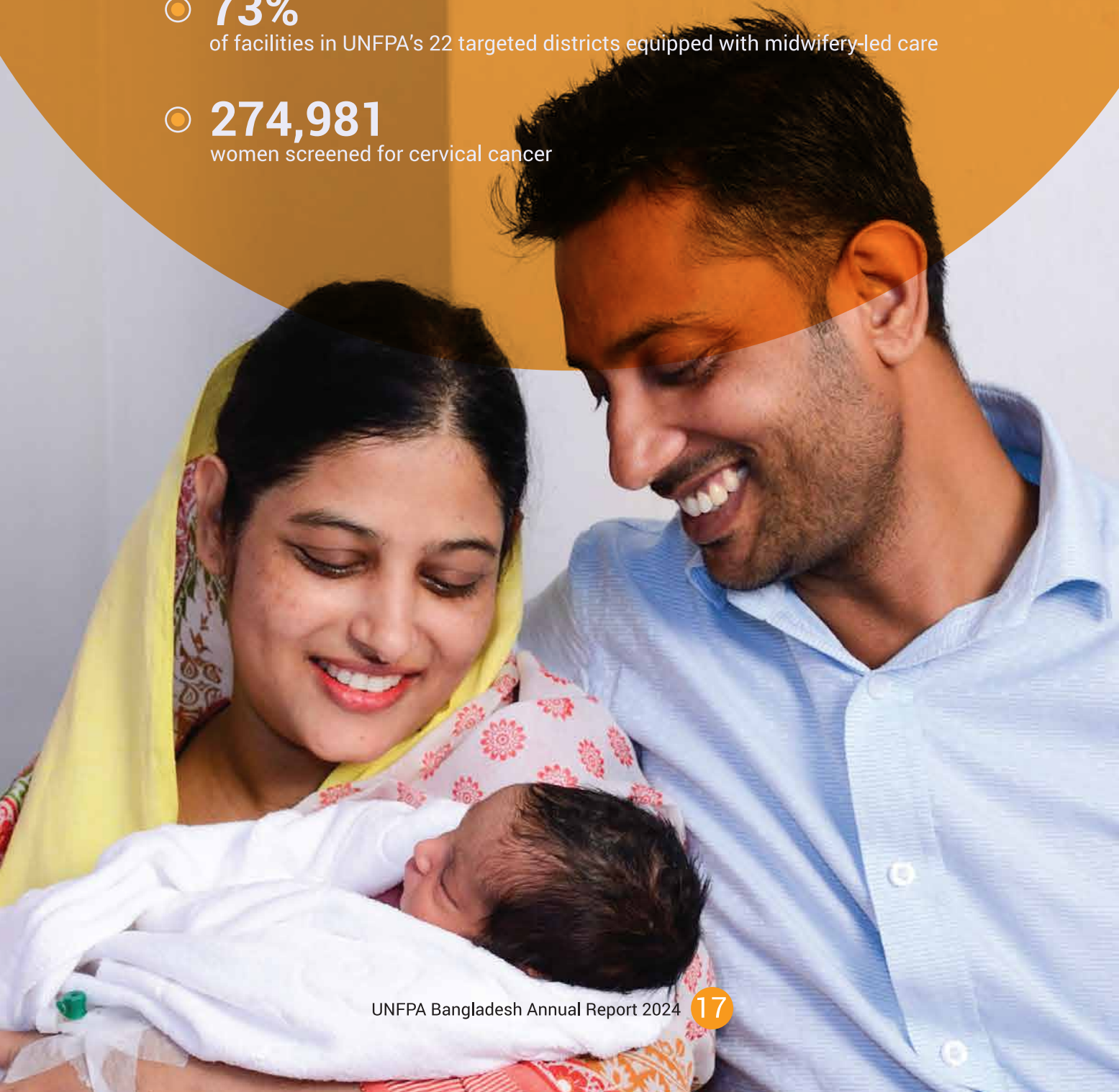
A photograph of a young woman, likely a nurse or healthcare worker, wearing a pink short-sleeved uniform shirt and a matching pink cap with a black band. She is smiling warmly and looking down at a patient, whose hands and part of a patterned garment are visible in the bottom right corner. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A large, semi-circular orange graphic element is positioned on the left side of the image, partially overlapping the woman's uniform.

TOWARDS ZERO PREVENTABLE MATERNAL DEATHS

○ **154,734**
newborns delivered safely by UNFPA-supported midwives

○ **73%**
of facilities in UNFPA's 22 targeted districts equipped with midwifery-led care

○ **274,981**
women screened for cervical cancer





From 2000 to 2023, Bangladesh achieved a 79% reduction in its maternal mortality ratio – nearly double the global average of 40% – showing what is possible when health systems function as human rights enablers. Still, these gains have not reached everyone, with women in remote, disaster-prone, and indigenous communities still underserved. Midwifery shortages, supply chain disruptions in crises, and high out-of-pocket health costs threaten the hard-earned progress. In 2024, UNFPA strengthened technical support to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to ensure health systems reach every mother – no matter where she lives.

Midwives Save Lives

Expanding midwifery-led care could save millions of mothers and newborns annually at lower costs, with Bangladesh exemplifying this impact. In 2024, UNFPA supported the expansion of midwifery-led emergency obstetric and newborn care in 22 districts, equipping 73% of public health facilities for midwife-led services, up from 60% the previous year. As a result, skilled midwives safely delivered over 154,000 newborns.

Additionally, 518 new midwifery positions were created, and the newly deployed midwives have already managed over 5,573 critical cases of postpartum hemorrhage. They have also handled 7,542 cases of pre-eclampsia and eclampsia, marking a 22% increase compared to 2023.

Beyond routine care, midwives consistently step up as frontline responders during crises. In climate-vulnerable Sunamganj, for instance, they revived previously non-functional Union Health and Family Welfare Centres, facilitating 283 safe deliveries and managing over 5,000 antenatal and postnatal care visits.

Ending Preventable Deaths

The Government of Bangladesh has accelerated efforts to close structural gaps in the health system – ensuring that mothers don't die while giving life – especially from preventable causes. Through an improved Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) system, UNFPA supported the government's review of 525 maternal deaths, generating insights to improve clinical care and make informed policy decisions.

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among women in Bangladesh – but also one of the most preventable. In 2024, UNFPA supported the screening of 274,981 women, and referred 10,000 suspected cases for further treatment. Progress also continued in restoring dignity for women affected by obstetric fistula. 214 women were identified in UNFPA programme districts, and 116 of them have received surgical repairs along with rehabilitation and reintegration support. UNFPA also supported the operationalisation of 35 Fistula Corners in district hospitals across the country.



New Beginnings

Rokia Begum

A mother of six, 37-year-old Rokia Begum is a proud poultry farm owner from Sunamganj. Not long ago, she could not have imagined this life.

A survivor of obstetric fistula, Rokia lived with this childbirth injury for nearly two decades. Caused by prolonged, obstructed labour without timely medical care, this injury results in incontinence and, for many like Rokia, extreme social isolation.

“I couldn’t go anywhere without fear,” she recalled. “I was made to sleep on the floor because of the smell; I felt worthless.”

Fistula disproportionately affects adolescent mothers, and women from poor socio-economic backgrounds with limited access to resources. Factors like child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and home births without skilled attendants all increase the risk. Though devastating, fistula is both preventable and treatable.

“My family thought I was cursed,” Rokia said. And for years, she believed it too – until a community health worker, trained to recognise fistula, visited her village and encouraged her to seek care. That was all Rokia needed: words of encouragement, affirmation, and, most importantly, reproductive health information. The hardest part she did on her own, travelling to a Fistula Corner in Dhaka without delay and undergoing surgery. “For the first time in years, I experienced hope,” she said.

Afterwards, Rokia joined a government rehabilitation programme, received skills training and a microloan. This is how she started her poultry business.

While nearly 17,000 women in Bangladesh are still living with undiagnosed and untreated fistula, Rokia’s transformation shows that women can break free, and are doing so in growing numbers, often with just a little nudge.

TOWARDS ZERO UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING

Family planning is the cornerstone of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). When individuals can plan their families, they can better plan their futures. Access to family planning prevents unintended pregnancies, reduces maternal injuries, and lowers the risks of unsafe abortions as well as neonatal deaths and stillbirths. It is life-saving, and is often the first step toward accessing a broader range of reproductive health services, opening up more and better choices for people over their bodies and lives.

● **112,520**

mothers received postpartum family planning services

● **2,586**

people reached with contraceptives during climate emergencies

● **First Rights-based**

National Family Planning Strategy approved

Family Planning is a Human Right

With UNFPA's support, Bangladesh approved its first-ever National Family Planning Strategy (2023-2030) in 2024. Grounded in a rights-based, people-centred framework to ensure universal access to family planning services, the strategy aims to empower women and girls, remove barriers to contraceptive security, and expand choices, including support for infertility services.

Additionally, in climate-affected areas, UNFPA-supported campaigns helped 1,833 women access intrauterine devices (IUD). UNFPA also delivered contraceptives to 2,586 people through doorstep delivery, mobile outreach, and the introduction of self-injectable DMPA-SC (Depot Medroxyprogesterone Acetate – Subcutaneous). This helped mitigate climate-induced supply disruptions, and supported individuals to retain control of their reproductive choices.

Meanwhile, across 22 UNFPA programme districts, 112,520 mothers received postpartum family planning (PPFP) services, promoting safer birth spacing and better health outcomes. Today, 51% of public health facilities in these districts provide quality PPFP services, with more facilities working towards this goal.



TOWARDS ZERO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

Gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices like child marriage are serious human rights violations that continue to persist in Bangladesh. The transformation required is vast, but it must be done – because every woman who lives in fear of violence and every girl forced into marriage represents a collective setback.

Ending Gender-based Violence

● **33,833**

women and girls accessed life-saving gender-based violence protection services

● **Legal Reforms**

advanced to criminalise domestic violence and enhance protections against sexual harassment

Advancing Rights and Justice

In 2024, Bangladesh moved closer to stronger legal protection against GBV and harmful practices. With UNFPA's support, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) led the drafting of amendments to the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act 2011 and introducing a new Sexual Harassment Prevention and Protection Ordinance through consultations with over 150 stakeholders across government, the judiciary, law enforcement, civil society, and academia. The ministry has since made the drafts public to gather feedback. The proposed changes aim to criminalise domestic violence, expand legal protections for divorced women, domestic workers, cohabitating partners, and survivors of child marriage, and, finally, strengthen safeguards against sexual harassment in educational institutions and workplaces.

UNFPA also supported MoWCA in disseminating the 4th cycle of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations on GBV and harmful practices, and worked with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to develop an implementation plan for putting these recommendations into action. Additionally, UNFPA worked with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to finalise a national Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for medico-legal services. This equips medical professionals to conduct forensic examinations and documentation, addressing survivors' health needs while supporting their access to legal services and justice.

Strengthening Lifelines of Survivors

In 2024, UNFPA helped strengthen the systems that survivors of gender-based violence rely on, from health and police to social services. Across the country, 532 police officers were trained to respond with care that upholds survivors' dignity, rights, and choices. An additional 41 medical professionals were trained in clinical management of rape. These investments enabled 33,833 women and adolescent girls to access lifesaving support at health centres, police service desks, and community safe spaces nationwide.

Recognising the Department of Women and Children Affairs (DWA) as a key agency frequently approached by survivors for support, UNFPA developed the country's first national guidance note on GBV case management, successfully advocated for its nationwide adoption across 473 DWA offices and trained the first batch of officials.





Restoring Hope

Nazneen

At the One-Stop Crisis Centre in Cox's Bazar District Hospital, Nazneen, a mental health and psychosocial support counsellor, sees everyday how quality support helps survivors recover from gender-based violence.

"Often, the OCC is the first place survivors turn to," she explained. "We help them access a number of services, but just as importantly, we make sure they feel emotionally supported throughout the process."

As a counsellor, Nazneen has walked alongside many survivors on their journeys to recovery. One survivor's transformation, in particular, she often shares to explain the impact of her work.

"When we first met, she seemed completely broken," Nazneen recalled. The survivor had talked about shutting down her business and disappearing altogether.

Gender-based violence deeply impacts mental health, increasing the risk of depression, among other disorders. But with the right support, most survivors can regain their psychological wellbeing.

"We worked to rebuild the survivor's confidence and health, piece by piece. Today, she's back to running her business again," Nazneen added. "It's difficult to see someone lose hope. But we're here to remind survivors of their inherent worth and connect them with the support that can quite literally save lives."

With strengthened services, she sees growing signs of progress in the district. "We are managing cases referred by survivors themselves, who have used our services in the past."

With UNFPA's support, frontline workers like Nazneen are building trust in the systems and creating lasting pathways to empowerment for survivors of gender-based violence.

Ending Child Marriage

A staggering 51% of girls in Bangladesh are married before age 18. This entrenched practice, rooted in gender inequality and harmful norms, robs them of their childhood, education, and potential. UNFPA is accelerating a multi-sectoral and evidence-based strategy to tackle the core drivers of child marriage and promote transformative change.

● **300,000**

women engaged in community dialogues to promote adolescent girls' empowerment and prevent child marriage

● **44,745**

adolescents, including 27,880 girls, received life skills education in schools and madrasahs

● **279**

grassroots NGOs trained to prevent and respond to child marriage

Shaping a New Community Consensus

In 2024, UNFPA launched Shombhabona: Social Protection Plus – a programme that leverages social protection, reaching more than one million high-risk families annually, to accelerate shift in harmful gender and social norms underpinning gendered inequalities and harmful practices, including child marriage and gender-based violence.

Through community interventions, over 300,000 women from high-risk households are adopting new behaviours today, prioritising daughters' education and agency, accessing sexual and reproductive health services, and promoting life trajectories beyond child marriage.

UNFPA also partnered with 279 community-based organisations, including youth and feminist-led and women's groups, to strengthen their capacity to prevent and respond to child marriage. At the district level, UNFPA supported the rollout of the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage in climate-affected districts such as Jamalpur, Sirajganj, Patuakhali, and Bagerhat, and trained 604 members of Child Marriage Prevention Committees to improve local protection networks.

A young girl with dark hair, wearing a white school uniform and a red sari, is sitting and looking towards the camera. Behind her is a chalkboard with faint drawings and text, including "I love My School" and "PANEL".

Fulfilling Every Young Person's Potential

UNFPA supports young people to prioritise their health, pursue education, and lead positive change in their communities. In 2024, Comprehensive Life Skills Education (CLSE) content was successfully integrated into the national secondary curriculum, aligning 60% with global standards. A number of 44,745 adolescents, including 27,880 girls, across 1,093 secondary schools and madrasahs, received life skills education. UNFPA also supported the strengthening of 25 grassroots youth-led organisations across 10 districts, empowering them to advocate for adolescent health and wellbeing. Thanks to UNFPA-supported Alapon helpline, which continues to be a trusted, safe space for youth nationwide, 17,536 young people received mental health support, sexual and reproductive health counselling, and information on protection from violence throughout 2024.



A Matter of Rights and Choices

Shahena

At just 14, Shahena's wedding was fixed. "This was not how things were supposed to go," she recalled. A top student with dreams of becoming a social worker, she resisted the marriage, with support from her school friends and teachers.

But it was an uphill battle that often tested her resolve, and made her wonder if she was fighting everyone alone.

This changed when a UNFPA-supported caseworker connected Shahena and her mother to a community-based women's group mobilising against gender-based violence and child marriage. This is where Shahena found a community of women and girls just like her.

"I used to think fighting for my education was just about fulfilling my dream, that it was a simple matter of wanting something so strongly that it placed me at odds with others," she explained. "But I've realised education is my fundamental right. And marrying when I'm ready is entirely my choice too."

Shahena's mother, who had initially pushed for her early marriage, underwent an extraordinary transformation herself. With encouragement from the women's group, she dedicated herself to learning, and engaging in dialogue – emerging as an advocate for girls' education over time.

Across Bangladesh, communities are building consensus around new norms and reshaping their futures. And this means girls like Shahena – now 17 – are staying in schools.



SHOMBHABONAR UTSHOB: WHERE TECHNOLOGY MEETS TRADITION FOR TRANSFORMATION

For too long, early marriage has amputated the potential of millions of girls in Bangladesh. Their notion of a career, higher education, or a life beyond domesticity often withers, their world shrinking to the confines of early motherhood. Boys, though less directly affected, also find their aspirations constrained by this prevailing social script.

Shombhabonar Utshob (The Festival of Potential), a UNFPA initiative, confronts this entrenched problem with a culturally resonant, evidence-driven approach. It harnesses the vibrant setting of a traditional Bangladeshi 'mela' (fair), transforming it into an

immersive experience that inspires new life paths for adolescents and their families.

Imagine a mela where traditional swings are reimagined as Virtual Reality games, allowing adolescents to metaphorically dismantle societal barriers. Elsewhere, an AI 'fortune teller' uses a participant's interests and aptitudes to sketch out tangible life trajectories. Here, career counsellors and inspiring role models replace traditional vendors, 'selling' aspirations by providing concrete information to adolescents and families on diverse career pathways.

These role models are not distant celebrities; they are police officials, nurses, teachers, entrepreneurs, and artists from within their own communities who have forged successful careers. They engage parents and adolescents in intergenerational conversations, demonstrating the tangible benefits of investing in girls' education and delaying marriage. For adolescents, they paint vivid pictures of what their own fully realised agency can achieve.

In 2024, UNFPA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Education, and local district administrations, organised two festivals in Bagerhat and Cox's Bazar. These events provided direct counselling to some 1,100 girls and engaged more than 5,000 people, including teachers, parents, and community leaders, from the deepest corners of these districts.



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Bangladesh grappled with several humanitarian crises in 2024, from the climate-induced disasters to the protracted Rohingya refugee crisis, with its evolving security challenges and new influxes. These shocks are straining the limits of an already imperfect system, and hitting vulnerable communities the hardest. UNFPA is on the ground, ensuring continued support for communities on the margin.

Rohingya Refugee Response

Working under the Joint Response Plan, UNFPA provided technical leadership across the Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sector, the Sexual and Reproductive Health Working Group under the Health Sector, and the Adolescent and Youth Working Group hosted by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group. In 2024, these efforts led to:

- **335,328**
people accessed life-saving SRHR services in Rohingya camps and host communities
- **92,000**
adolescents and caregivers in Cox's Bazar reached, lowering adolescent pregnancies from 18.4% to 7%
- **534,096**
individuals engaged in community mobilisation efforts against gender-based violence



Upholding Choice, Safety, and Dignity

Through a network of health facilities and Women-Friendly Spaces in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, UNFPA supported more than 335,000 people with antenatal and postnatal care, informed and voluntary family planning, and psychosocial counselling. Community health workers further reached 468,201 people with SRHR information and referrals.

Maternal deaths fell by nearly 50% in the camps – from 84 in 2021 to 46 in 2024 – thanks to stronger referral systems, improved emergency obstetric care, and use of the real-time maternal and perinatal mortality surveillance and response (MPMSR) system. UNFPA also supplied over 90% of all family planning commodities for the operationalisation of the Government's Family Planning Strategy (2022–2025). The introduction of a standardised Maternal and Child Health card in 2024 is set to deliver more benefits for mothers and newborns.

Additionally, UNFPA's community-based work to prevent gender-based violence reached over 534,000 Rohingya refugees. Among them, nearly 3,900 people joined sessions on family planning led by trained religious imams. These efforts are making a difference. The number of people willing to discuss gender-based violence in their communities rose sharply, from just 16% in 2020 to 83% in 2024. Across 71 UNFPA-supported centres, over 384,000 women and girls accessed integrated GBV and SRH services. And by placing trained caseworkers in government-run One-Stop Crisis Centres and offering sexual and reproductive health services in Women-Friendly Spaces, UNFPA is creating a model of care that meets women and girls where they are.

Finally, nearly 370,000 adolescent visits were recorded at UNFPA-supported youth centres and learning spaces, and community-based GBV prevention sessions reached over 92,000 adolescents and caregivers. These efforts in combination are creating a visible impact: adolescent pregnancy rates dropped from 18.4% in 2018 to just 7% in 2024.





A Search for Equality and Faith

Nurul Kabir

It has been over seven years since Nurul Kabir arrived as a refugee to the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar. Now 30 and a new father, he leads prayers as a respected Imam.

In his early days at the camp, Nurul often saw awareness sessions taking place in the mosque yard. Curious, he joined several UNFPA-supported sessions for faith leaders. Over time, with increased engagement, he came to see spreading the message of equality as part of his religious duties, explaining, "It's just another way to guide my community toward a just life."

Determined to be part of that change, he has been using his sermons to promote equality and speak openly about sexual and reproductive health.

"I've gone door to door, encouraging people to see women and girls as equals," he explained. "If women can be presidents and prime ministers, why not your daughters too? That's what I tell people."

And it is working. So far, Nurul has helped prevent nine child marriages. He remains particularly popular among young men navigating the challenges of camp life and anxieties of young adulthood.

Still, resistance to his teachings is common, but he welcomes dialogue. "I find it healthy to have these conversations. I don't shut them down. They help people think about where their ideas are coming from."

Nurul believes his mission will be complete when women and girls' education, safety and leadership are no longer seen as exceptions – but simply the norm. Until then, he carries on.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL DISASTERS

● **597**

safe deliveries supported by midwives

● **19,000**

people reached within 72 hours of the August floods

● **40,000**

women and girls accessed services via mobile health camps in disaster-hit districts

● **6,000**

women and girls in climate-vulnerable districts received psychosocial support

Reaching Women, Girls and Youth in a Changing Climate

In 2024, Bangladesh was hit by a series of climate-related disasters, including Cyclone Remal in the south, and severe flooding in the eastern and northern regions. UNFPA responded quickly and decisively. Within 72 hours of the Eastern floods in August, emergency teams reached over 19,000 people.

Throughout its humanitarian response to the floods and Cyclone Remal, UNFPA enabled 40,000 women and adolescent girls to access essential sexual and reproductive health services through 160 mobile health camps. UNFPA also distributed 6,727 baby kits to pregnant women and new mothers, 11,729 dignity kits to women and girls, and 18,650 menstrual health management kits to adolescent girls. Trained midwives supported 597 safe deliveries in affected areas. Additionally, 2,370 pregnant women received critical cash assistance to cover transportation and emergency obstetric care. For sustained support, 126 trained healthcare workers, including 65 midwives, were deployed to high-risk areas. Moreover, UNFPA-supported counsellors provided mental health and psychosocial care to 6,000 women and girls from climate-vulnerable communities.

In addition, 16,170 people further received practical, climate-sensitive reproductive health information through 400 awareness sessions. A total of 1,029 youth volunteers were trained and mobilised, delivering peer-led SRHR education and psychosocial support to over 40,000 adolescents. Over 880 climate-displaced women received training in climate-smart livelihoods, combined with information and knowledge on SRHR and GBV prevention.



When Systems are Resilient by Design

UNFPA worked closely with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to finalise the Health National Adaptation Plan (C3HNAP), supporting integration of climate resilience into health systems. Subsequently, the country introduced its first-ever protocols for delivering climate-sensitive SRHR services. Meanwhile, national emergency response capacity was strengthened with the integration of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for SRHR into the country's 5th Health Sector Programme.

UNFPA also partnered with the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to convene a national strategic dialogue, bringing together persons with disabilities, gender-diverse individuals, adolescents, and other marginalised groups to gather insights for ensuring inclusive humanitarian response and preparedness.

Further progress was made with the launch of Bangladesh's first eco-friendly health facility at the Mongla Upazila Health Complex in Bagerhat, aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of healthcare operations.

Anticipatory Action

Ahead of the July 2024 floods in the Jamuna Basin, UNFPA reached over 19,000 women, girls, and vulnerable groups across four districts through anticipatory action. Using early warning systems and forecast-based triggers, the response was activated before the flood hit, helping reduce its humanitarian toll. Digital cash transfers via bKash, transportation allowances to help beneficiaries reach distribution points, and partnerships with local vendors all helped improve access to essential items and stabilise supply chains.

7,500 women received in-kind dignity kits, while 2,000 women, including 483 women with disabilities, received cash for dignity item kits. UNFPA reached 9,654 women and girls with sexual and reproductive health services, including baby kits for 1,620 pregnant women and antenatal care for 1,534 women. 6,500 adolescent girls received menstrual health support. With the provision of safe delivery kits, three government health facilities reported a 40% rise in deliveries the following month. A post-response survey found that 97.8% of all recipients were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality and quantity of the items they received.



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA AND INTELLIGENCE

At the 1994 ICPD conference, countries committed to collecting reliable, culturally appropriate, and internationally comparable population data, with the inclusion of marginalised groups. UNFPA works toward this commitment, and supports the Government of Bangladesh in strengthening national capacity to produce data reflecting the diversity and lived realities of its population.

- ◉ **Largest National**


violence Against Women survey conducted

- ◉ **27,092**

vulnerable individuals identified for targeted assistance in disaster-prone districts

Women Measuring Violence Against Women

Violence against women often happens behind closed doors, commonly at the hands of intimate partners. It is difficult to recognise and even more difficult to document. With safety protocols, ethical safeguards, and proven statistical methods, UNFPA supported the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in conducting the 2024 Violence Against Women Survey – largest of its kind globally, and the first in a decade to fill a critical national data gap. Led by 127 trained female enumerators, the survey carries the voices of 27,476 women, who chose to come forward with their experiences.



For the first time, a survey by the national statistical office included a qualitative component to go beyond the numbers and better understand women's lived experiences. The survey also gathered data on the economic cost of violence borne by survivors, and is set to provide disaggregated data on women with disabilities, women living in disaster-prone areas, and women facing technology-facilitated gender-based violence – marking several firsts for Bangladesh.

Systems that Count Everyone

UNFPA supported the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics to strengthen its Geographic Information System (GIS) capacity, enabling better geospatial mapping for disaster preparedness, SRHR service delivery, and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) monitoring. A new beneficiary database covering over 27,092 vulnerable individuals across five disaster-prone districts was further developed to help deliver targeted emergency support. In partnership with the General Economics Division, UNFPA also contributed research on climate-induced displacement and produced key analyses to inform national planning around the demographic and gender dividends.



In the Eye of the Storm

Pakhi

At 26, Pakhi was one of the youngest interviewers among the hundred-plus women who gathered from all over Bangladesh to conduct the 2024 Violence Against Women survey.

In March, she was deployed to Sylhet – a division nine times more vulnerable to flood-induced displacement than the national average. Last year was no different.

“Village after village was cut off,” she recalled. “We could only reach the women by dinghy boats or bamboo rafts. Sometimes, we had no choice but to wade through waist-deep water.”

The heat was unbearable, too. Bangladesh faced its longest heatwave in 76 years. And then, in the final days of data collection, Cyclone Remal struck. Still, Pakhi and her team made it to every door.

“Our respondents were always surprised,” she laughs. “They’d ask, ‘How did you even get here?’”

And once she arrived, women didn’t want her to leave. For most, it was the first time they had disclosed their experiences of violence to another person.

“I remember one woman insisting on cooking lunch for me,” Pakhi says. “And then, this just kept happening – women offering food and kindness, sending me back with meals for my team.”

She calls the survey the most meaningful work of her career, and urges, “The least we can do is believe survivors, and not forget the thousands of barriers they have overcome to share their stories with us.”

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Exclusion can render entire communities, along with their diversity, invisible. To address this, health and protection programmes must be tailored to effectively reach those furthest behind. In 2024, UNFPA did just that, delivering targeted interventions for persons with disabilities, transgender individuals, sex workers, indigenous communities, and adolescents in crisis-affected areas.

○ **3,089**

mothers, including 592 indigenous women, accessed family planning services in underserved communities

○ **300**

transgender individuals and 97 sex workers reached with tailored health and protection services during disasters

○ **2,500**

female sex workers screened for HIV and syphilis, with identified cases successfully treated

Culturally Affirming Care

The health system in the Chittagong Hill Tracts has long faced severe staff shortages, as remoteness and language and cultural barriers deter health workers from other districts. With very few local health workers, and even fewer midwives, many facilities in the region remain completely non-functional. To bridge this gap, UNFPA awarded full midwifery scholarships to seven students from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, who will be key to providing culturally affirming care to their historically underserved communities. Meanwhile, in Gaibandha, midwives from the Santal community provided vital care through 1,541 antenatal visits, 352 postnatal check-ups, and 259 laboratory tests in 2024. A total of 3,089 mothers, including 592 indigenous women, accessed family planning services.





Tailored by and for Communities

With input from women and girls with disabilities, emergency kits were redesigned for inclusivity. In 2024, 587 people received dignity and menstrual health kits suited to their needs. UNFPA also expanded outreach to gender-diverse groups during crises, reaching over 300 transgender individuals, as well as 97 sex workers – groups whose vulnerabilities spike in crises, but often lose access to services first. Among a targeted group of 2,496 female sex workers, 1,448 further underwent HIV screening, and 988 were tested for syphilis.



Advancing Understanding of Violence Against Women with Disabilities

Disability is a risk factor for women and girls experiencing violence. Bangladesh joined a growing number of countries by including a dedicated module in its Violence Against Women Survey to measure the experiences of women with disabilities, providing the first set of nationally representative data. This module uses the internationally recognised Washington Group's six-question set on disability.



A New Lease on Life

Farida

When the Women-Friendly Space first opened its doors in Ukhiya, 38-year-old Farida – living with a physical disability – was among the very first to visit.

Determined not to let her disability define her limits, she made the trip four times a month, relying on local transport. Before long, she received a wheelchair, and with it, in her own words “a new lease on life.”

“I used to spend most of my time alone,” she said. “My world was small, and my family situation was not exactly great.”

Since arriving, Farida threw herself into everything the space offered: sewing workshops, psychosocial counseling, and health and protection sessions. But more than the skills or the wheelchair, it is the friends she has made that keep her coming back. A fun-loving person, Farida fondly speaks of Luna, Sohela and Nazifa, friends who visit her even on the weeks that she cannot make it to the centre.

Looking ahead, Farida knows her community will grow even further. “We’ll need more sewing machines, more computers, more wheelchairs – because more women will arrive.”

Every year, 35 of these UNFPA-supported facilities across Cox’s Bazar bring critical health and protection services to at least 188,000 women and girls.

PARTNERSHIPS AND INNOVATION

- ◉ **1.35**
million people reached with integrated health and protection services
- ◉ **8.4**
million digital users engaged through the 'Celebrating Daughters' campaign
- ◉ **55,819**
individuals accessed pharmacy-based SRHR counselling

Celebrating Fathers and Daughters

UNFPA partnered with Prothom Alo, a leading national media platform, for the *Celebrating Daughters* campaign, reaching 8.4 million digital users. The campaign highlighted the father-daughter bond and promoted positive masculinities. It encouraged fathers to foster equality in relationships and support their daughters' health, education, and career aspirations. The campaign collected letters from fathers and daughters nationwide and held intergenerational dialogues across the country.

Digital Innovations for Enhanced Monitoring

UNFPA piloted a digital monitoring system in 27 garment factories to improve tracking and management of family planning commodities. Moreover, a real-time data visualisation tool was launched across 22 priority districts to enhance monitoring and evaluation of SRHR programmes, providing insights on service coverage, gaps, and population needs.

Komolaphul Initiative: Empowering Female Pharmacists

UNFPA's 'Komolaphul (Orange Flower)' initiative strategically empowers marginalised girls in districts like Bogura and Bagerhat by training them for a non-traditional career as Female Pharmacy Associates. This model uniquely tackles two interconnected challenges: it confronts deep-seated gender norms by placing young women in the male-dominated pharmacy sector, while leveraging their presence to reduce the stigma surrounding sexual and reproductive health (SRH). These trained associates transform local pharmacies into safe, accessible hubs where other women and girls can receive counseling, effectively integrating these pharmacies into the public health system. Alongside providing women and girls with economic independence, this initiative expanded community access to SRH counselling for 55,819 people and referred over 35,202 for further care, such as family planning and antenatal services, at public health facilities.



যৌন ও প্রজনন স্বাস্থ্য সেবা ও পরামর্শ
এখান এখানেই!

PENNING A NEW NARRATIVE FOR FATHERHOOD

As part of the 'Celebrating Daughters' campaign, fathers and daughters across Bangladesh exchanged letters, giving voice to feelings often left unspoken. These letters capture the very essence of the initiative: a transformative model of fatherhood, a redefined vision of masculinity, and the profound strength of the father-daughter bond.

Dearest Baba,

This story is about a king. We imagine kings with grand stables filled with elephants and horses. But this king is different. He is very ordinary, and he says his greatest treasures are his daughters, his two princesses.

Have you already guessed that I have been telling our story? Just like you always can tell, even from another city, what exactly is going on with us, what's in our hearts?

Well, Baba, I never thanked you.

They always asked, 'Don't you have any sons, only two daughters?'

Thank you for laughing off those questions, and holding us – your daughters – closer instead.

Thank you for never seeing us as 'chores,' but as your lifelong 'confidantes.'

With love,
Your youngest daughter

* 'Baba' means 'Father' in Bangla



Dearest Daughter,

Back in university, I used to walk past a house with a little bike on the porch. I dreamed of buying one like it for my future daughter.

Before you even started school, I brought one home for you. You cried when I took off the training wheels – but soon, you were riding on your own, and I was so proud.

When your amateur drawing was published in a national newspaper, I felt like I had conquered the world.

Every precious moment of your childhood is captured in my camera – your first day on earth, the first steps you took, the first lunchbox you carried to school, even the tailor who made your first school uniform.

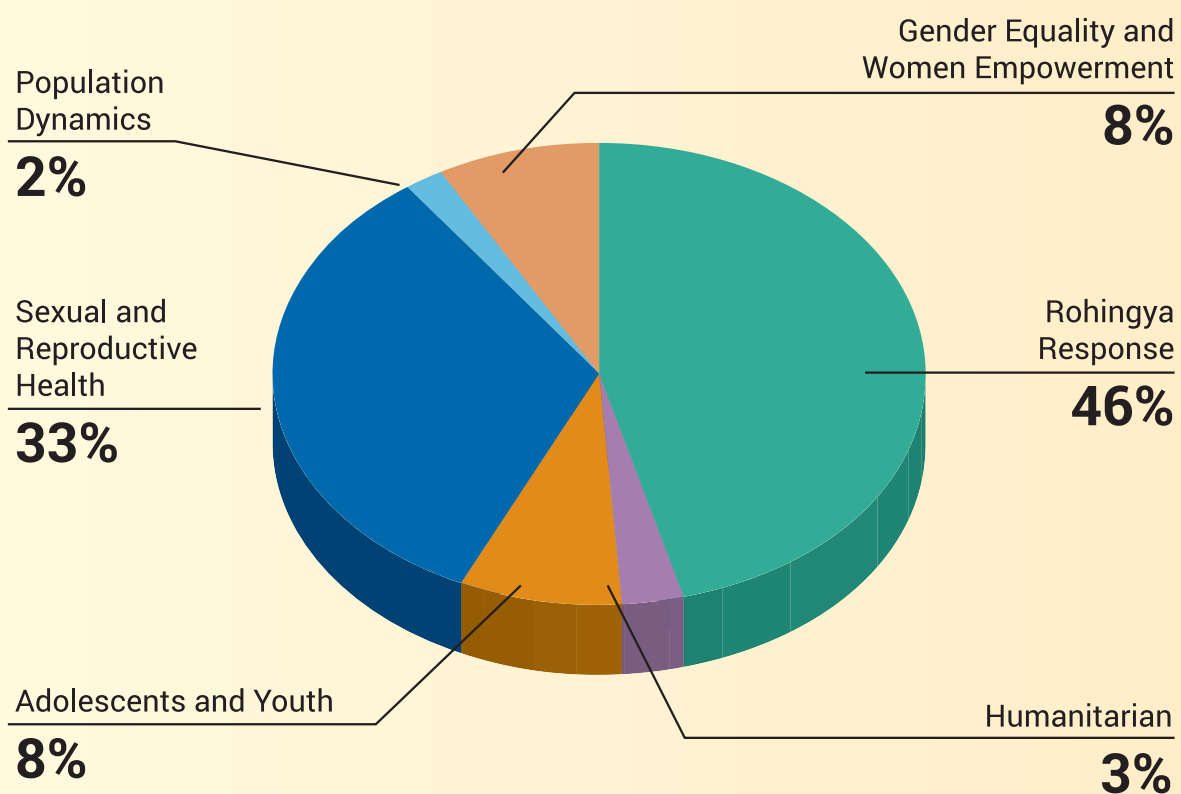
My father was my ‘hero.’ I wanted to surpass him in fatherhood and become a ‘superhero’ for you. There have been losses in many aspects of my life, but through you, I always find my triumph.

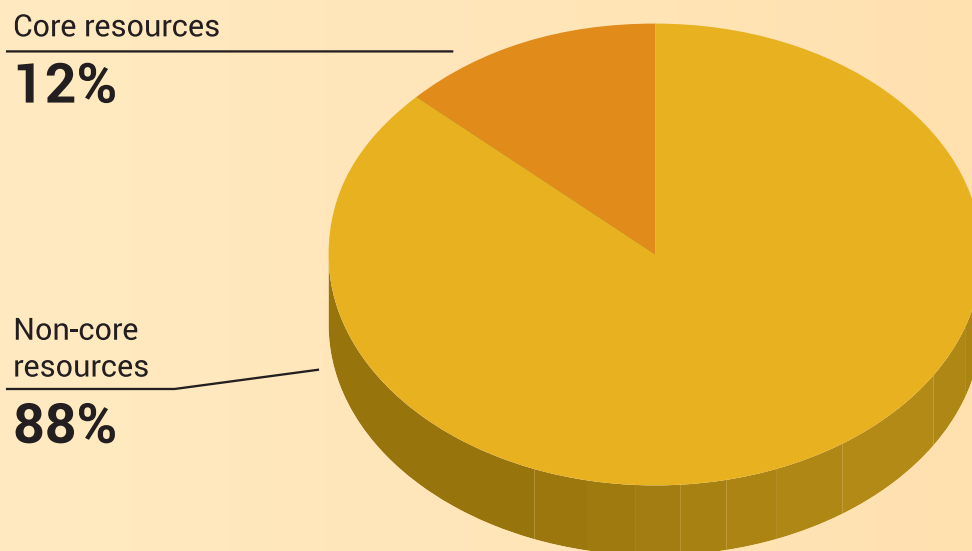
May you always be free and soar across the sky like a butterfly.

Sincerely,
Your Baba

Photo Credit: Nasif Imtiaz, Celebrating Daughters

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW





Total Programme Delivery:
USD 39.5 million

Core Resource:
USD 4.8 million (12%)

Non-core resource:
USD 34.7 million (88%)

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