INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

On 1 October, we celebrated International Day of Older Persons.

During COVID-19, the virus is not the only thing threatening the elderly.

We must all do our part to aid and empower elders during this difficult time.

Pandemics should not change how we address age and ageing.

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In the beginning of the month, UNFPA Representative Dr. Asa Torkelsson met for the first time in person with the new Additional Secretary of the ERD, Dr. Nahid Rashid.

Dr. Torkelsson updated the Additional Secretary about UNFPA's programmes in Bangladesh, thanked her for ERD's support to UNFPA in Bangladesh and requested ERD for the extension of CPAP and TAPP.
On 7 October, UNFPA participated in the virtual launch of UNICEF’s and UNFPA's joint report on the progress of ending child marriage in Bangladesh.

State Minister of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Fazilatun Nessa Indira attended the launch as a chief guest of honor.
On 11 October, we celebrated International Day of the Girl, the theme of which this year was "My Voice, Our Equal Future".

We marked the day on social media by giving adolescent girls the opportunity to voice out their concerns and dreams to inspire us all to fight for a more equal future for women and girls.

"People around me treat me differently than boys. It is very common in our community. I want to join the Bangladesh Police and make a difference."

Tomashree, 15 years old, Bogra District
On the eve of International Day of the Girl, our Representative Dr. Torkelsson attended the launch of Plan International's “Girls’ Right and Equality Movement, where Plan announced its commitment to work for girls’ rights and equality in Bangladesh for the next 10 years.

Youth from all over Bangladesh moderated and facilitated the event, which was also attended by the Director-General of the NGO Affairs Bureau of the Prime Minister’s Office, Md. Rashadul Islam and Ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh, Alexandra Berg von Linde.
For International Day of the Girl, we also organized a art competition with a2i, where we asked girls in Bangladesh to paint their future. The winners were awarded in an online prize giving ceremony on 11 October.
We also virtually attended a regional meeting on a government programme called “Konnaratno”. The programme is currently empowering 1,700 rural girls in Panchagarh district by providing them bicycles and training them to become educators on matters related to reproductive health and child marriage in their communities.

The Speaker of Parliament, Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and Member of Parliament, Mr. Md. Mazaharul Hoque Prodhan, delivered remarks at the meeting.
This month marked an important milestone for the SRHR team, when the Elimination of Fistula programme was launched in Rajshahi division. Rajshahi is the fourth division the programme will cover and we hope our continued efforts with the national government will eventually lead to Bangladesh eliminating obstetric fistula by 2030.

Additionally, during a divisional workshop in Rangpur, the three-layer cloth mask developed by 12 fistula survivors was officially launched.
On 24 October, UNFPA celebrated the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. The special UN Day was marked in Bangladesh with multiple exciting activities such as an online concert, an art exhibition and a debate competition.

Even during COVID-19, we are proud to continue providing lifesaving services to women and young people, together with our partners.
On 16-17 October, UNFPA hosted Bangladesh’s 5th National Youth Conference on Family Planning. Over 500 youth advocates from Bangladesh virtually participated in the conference and had the opportunity to discuss the importance of family planning and the challenges COVID-19 poses to it.

The Minister of Education, Dr. Dipu Moni and the Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Md. Ali Noor delivered remarks during the opening session of the conference.
UN has been marking this October as Mental Health Awareness Month.

During COVID-19, it is more important than ever that we fight the stigma against mental health issues and support each other in the struggles we face.

Our team in Cox’s Bazar exemplified this spirit this month by conducting a series of sessions on "self-care and wellbeing"
Our recent campaign to promote women leadership at UNFPA Bangladesh was heavily featured on UNFPA's internal magazine "Voices".

We should all feel fortunate for the opportunity to work with such talented and ambitious women every single day!
On October 8, we participated in a high-level policy dialogue to end child marriage, prevent gender-based violence and improve maternal health in the context of natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury; Minister of Home Affairs, Asaduzzaman Khan; State Minister of Women and Children Affairs, Fazilatun Nessa India; State Minister of Public Administration and many other important representatives of the government participated in the dialogue.
RAPE IN BANGLADESH

This month, heinous instances of rape mobilized the people of Bangladesh to the streets to demand a Bangladesh, where women can live safe lives free from violence.

UNFPA stands in solidarity with the protesters in their rightful struggle to end rape and ensure protection for survivors, but does not stand behind the government's decision to impose capital punishment for perpetrators.

We will continue our advocacy efforts with greater intensity to end rape in Bangladesh and work with the Government and its partners to provide support and healing for survivors.
This month, our sister agency World Food Programme received the huge honor of being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

We are delighted to partner with WFP in several initiatives and look forward to continuing our joint efforts for the benefit of humanity in Bangladesh and around the world.
On International Disaster Risk Reduction Day, UNFPA attended a strategic high-level event organized by the Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief.

The Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, virtually graced the event and noted the importance of gender-responsive measures to battle climate change. The event also highlighted the importance of women volunteers in disaster response, which is a result of UNFPA and SIDA supported sensitization on gender-balanced measures.
This month, Dr. Asa Torkelsson also had a meeting with the Secretary and CEO of Public Private Partnership Authority of the Prime Minister's Office, Ms. Sultana Afroz.

They discussed UNFPA's support to strengthen youth volunteerism in Bangladesh.
This month, UNFPA participated in an orientation training for the new SRHR Officer of DGHS, which was attended by the Additional Director General of DGHS, Meerjady Sabrina Flora.
Between 1-8 October, UNFPA facilitated a series of training session for SRHR officers on combating fistula and improving maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response in Bangladesh.
This month, we also attended the Health Minister's annual National Award Ceremony, where different actors of the health sector of Bangladesh were recognized for their efforts to improve public health.

A total of 43 awards were distributed to hospitals, health offices and community health services around the country. The event was organized by DHGS with the support of WHO and UKAid.
This month, UNFPA participated in a webinar, where six UNFPA Country Offices in the Asia Pacific region told about the innovative approaches they have taken to ensure people’s access to family planning amidst the challenges posed by COVID-19.

During the meeting, Hasan delivered a presentation, where he explained about the telemedicine services, virtual trainings and advocacy campaigns we have conducted during the pandemic.

The meeting gave country offices in the region a valuable opportunity to discuss how census data collection can be performed successfully despite the challenges at hand.

### POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2021 IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- **Official Name**: The People’s Republic Of Bangladesh
- **Independence**: 1971
- **Area**: 147,570 sq km
- **Population**: 166.5 million (Jul 2019)
- **Population density**: 1,125 (per sq km)
- **Sex ratio**: 100.2
- **Literacy rate (7Y+)**: 74.4
- **Currency**: Taka (1 US$ = 85 Taka)
- **Government**: Parliamentary Form
- **Climate**: Sub-tropical
- **Administrative units**: 8 divisions, 64 districts, 492 sub-districts, and 4,554 unions

**COVID-19**

- **Confirmed**: 401,586
- **Death**: 5,838
This month was also important for our team in Cox's Bazar, as UNHCR hosted the Rohingya Conference 2020 with donors, to spotlight how the international community can take action.

UNFPA Regional Director, Bjorn Andersson, spoke at the conference, highlighting the importance of continuing lifesaving SRHR and GBV services to Rohingya women and young people, while working closely with authorities to support a voluntary return to conducive and safe conditions in Myanmar.