Welcome Note

ARGENTINA MATAVEL PICCIN
Representative UNFPA Bangladesh
Chair of the United Nations Inter-agency Theme group on Adolescents and Youth

50 percent of the Bangladeshi population is under the age of 25 – creating a vibrant, dynamic and creative population, ready to roll-up their sleeves and contribute to development. Often, the potential and energy of adolescents and youth is underrated and not capitalized on. The United Nations in Bangladesh wants to ensure that the voices of young people are heard – within the UN system, but also by the general public and decision makers. Young people are not only the future of Bangladesh, but also its present.

The United Nations’ Engagement with Youth

When Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, started his second term in 2012, he identified five priorities that he wanted to focus on till 2017: one of these key areas is working with and for the empowerment of women and young people. To strengthen the UN system’s work with young people, the UN Secretary-General appointed the first envoy on youth, Ahmad Alhendawi of Jordan and tasked the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development to develop a system-wide action plan on youth.

The UN system in Bangladesh is coordinating its work on youth and uses the action plan as a guiding document to work towards adolescent and youth inclusion and empowerment.

The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth: Overall Goals

Employment and entrepreneurship: Ensure greater opportunities for youth to secure decent work and income over the life-cycle, contributing to a virtuous circle of poverty reduction, sustainable development and social inclusion.

Education, including comprehensive sexuality education: Ensure that young people, on an inclusive, equitable and universal basis, are actively learning in formal or non-formal education systems, and are receiving quality education on sexual and reproductive health.

Health: Ensure that young people, on an inclusive, equitable and universal basis, enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Protection of rights and civic engagement: Ensure the inherent rights of youth are recognized and upheld to enable young people’s engagement in all aspects of their development.

Political inclusion: Ensure the progressive, substantive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes at local, national, regional and international levels.
Women and Youth in Bangladesh

Women are the hearts of Bangladeshi society. Unlike old times, many now have the chance to share their inspiring stories, like Tahrunnesa Ahmed, a Bangladeshi woman, who received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay award for community leadership in 1978.

Through the creation of UN Women in 2010, the members of the United Nations promised to work for gender equality, specifically women’s empowerment, in developing countries such as Bangladesh. The global wave of change towards gender equality and women’s empowerment slowly moves the country forward. Currently, the participation of women in economic and decision making activities has shifted positively. Women are now 40 percent the workforce of the country (World Bank 2012) and are major contributors to the country’s ready made garment sector. With the help of small loans they have lifted their standards of living.

Young women are also operating small businesses successfully, taking initiatives on their own. Their handmade showpieces and crafts are being exported to countries in Europe and America. Poor women in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region for example are steadily transforming themselves into successful entrepreneurs.

Women having access to additional earnings is bringing solvency to families, especially in rural areas. Consequently, now more children are being sent to schools. These inspirational tales are making them role models, encouraging others to become economically independent.

Progress made in women’s socio-economic development signals better days showing hopes for realizing Article 10 of the constitution of Bangladesh that declares equal rights for women and men.

The Brave Men Campaign: Targeting Violence against Women

The Brave Men campaign targets male secondary school students aged 12-15 to motivate them to break the silence on violence against women, which remains a widespread social problem in Bangladesh. Daily news outlets consistently report incidents of physical and psychological abuse against women, sexual harassment, rape as well as a whole range of other offences.

Unfortunately, men have not been vocal in speaking out against these abuses and to combat this silence the United Nations Development Programme, the National Human Rights Commission, together with the Centre for Masculinity Studies have developed this campaign as a pilot project to encourage young men to speak up against violence against women, raise a general awareness of the problem of violence against women and promote an increase in understanding of rights and equality between the sexes.

The campaign seeks to highlight the message that any man can be a real man but it requires courage to be brave. A man can only resist violence against women if he is brave and can only be brave if he resists violence.

A pilot has taken place in 16 classrooms in boys’ schools in and around Dhaka City. Student participants embarked on a four month long training course, facilitated by young adult volunteers who used reflexive educational tools to get their message across. The campaign, which received extremely enthusiastic reviews from the boys, the facilitators, and the parents of students, is seeking to build on the pilot’s success and launch a second and much larger phase in 2014.
Time for Change: Fight against Gender Inequality

MAITRAEE MISTRY
Student, 17 years

We live in a society where women face discrimination at every step along the way. All over the world, gender discrimination is one of the foremost ranking problems that not only creates social problems, but also causes disruption to the economic cycle thus hampering development and decreasing world output.

There are still societies where women are confined within the threshold of their houses and are simply regarded as a birth machine, whose only job is to give birth to children without having the right to make decisions regarding their upbringing. They cannot work for a living, neither can they enjoy life.

Nowadays, women in Bangladesh are becoming educated, self-dependent and are learning to fend for themselves. But in doing so they face many obstacles, not only in their own homes, but also on the roads, workplaces, and more or less everywhere they go many women have to deal with eve teasing and abuse.

Many people try to cover up discrimination with spurious arguments. But women are not tools to be used – and men and women should be equals. It is the society that we create that accepts gender discrimination.

If we change our perception about women, so will society. Change begins at home – so let us step out of the confinements of patriarchy, and raise our voices as one against gender discrimination.

Putting an End to Child Marriage

NAJNIN NAHAR
HASAB

Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. 74 percent of girls marry before the age of 18. Early marriage leads to early pregnancy, adolescent mothers experience far higher complications in childbirth than more mature women, thus also increasing maternal mortality rates. The main reason for this problem is a lack of awareness amongst these groups of sexual and reproductive health rights that helps them make decisions in their own best interest.

I am working for the sexual and reproductive health rights project at HASAB that responds to this issue and I am counseling adolescents and their parents. We also have a call centre and anybody can call and access information on sexual and reproductive health rights. A website and a databank mean young women can easily access independent and reliable information. We believe we stop child marriage and protect our society. To contact our call centre dial 09611667788.

Managing Youth Migration

SAMIHA HUDA
IOM

Migration is increasingly becoming the preferred avenue for people seeking a brighter future. Bangladesh has a significant migrant population estimated to be 8.7 million with the Middle East and South Asian countries being popular destinations for young migrants.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) works with the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment to promote safe and orderly migration. Government and private training centres are providing vocational and technical training to the youth population both for internal and international job markets. The IOM Bangladesh office is providing technical support for many of the courses that target overseas job markets. Working with the Government of Bangladesh it has established resource centres which provide key information to prospective youth migrants and provides essential on the job training.

As part of the approach this includes services to migrant communities particularly in the area of family tracing and assessment for unaccompanied migrant children/youth in some countries, document verification for student migrants and also assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes for returnee migrants. It also has a dedicated team to assist Bangladeshi migrants who want to return back to their homeland and help set up a new life back in Bangladesh.

We believe we stop child marriage and protect our society.
To contact our call centre dial 09611667788.
In the last year, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme has built and strengthened relationships with various youth-led initiatives and organizations in different parts of Bangladesh. Together with the JAAGO foundation, Jege Otho foundation and Youth Power in Social Action, UNV conducted three youth consultations on the future post-2015. We believe the voices of young people, their dreams and aspirations have to be included in the next development framework – in the end it is the large population of young people around the world, who play an essential role in ensuring sustainable development.

In the three youth consultations, young people affiliated to youth organizations discussed global challenges and developed a joint vision for post-2015 focusing on health, education, environment, peace and child rights based on the principles of equality and sustainability.

The results of these consultations were published and shared with members of the open working group on post-2015 in New York, the Secretary-General’s envoy on youth, Ahmad Alhendawi and national decision makers.

Everyone should have a voice in the important post-2015 process – the results will influence the lives of billions and thus it is essential that the voices of the people are part of the process. If you want to share your priorities, visit: http://vote.myworld2015.org/UNV and participate in the global survey, which has reached 1.5 million people worldwide.
How Cricket helps spread awareness about HIV

During April 2014 Bangladesh was under the magical spell of cricket as the country hosted the ICC Twenty20 World Cup. On the road to Maona from Dhaka, which is about 28 km north-west of the capital, children could be seen, hitting cricket balls with wicker bats, adding to the air of excitement that gripped the country.

In March, 2014, Bangladesh hosted its first cricket clinic, providing essential knowledge about cultivating cricket skills to 80 underprivileged adolescents. These adolescents, aged between 14 and 17, were selected from every corner of the country. They participated in an intensive training that focused on improving their physical fitness, skill sets, game sense in terms of bowling, fielding, batting and body placement.

Teamed together with four coaches from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), one trainer, and one physiotherapist, the participants enjoyed a rigorous training session which conveyed messages ranging from the importance of a nutrition-rich diet, the need to be hardworking, as well as critical knowledge about HIV/AIDS awareness.

Awareness of HIV was instilled into the programme creatively as part of the THINK WISE campaign of the ICC T20 World Cup, which for more than 11 years has reached out to the cricketing fraternity to work together in responding to the global AIDS crisis.

This joint UNICEF, UNAIDS and International Cricket Council (ICC) partnership seeks to educate cricket players, coaches, commentators, broadcasters, volunteers and spectators about the AIDS epidemic, particularly around prevention and stigma issues, as around 10 million people living with HIV are from Test-playing nations. This number accounts for more than a quarter of all the people across the world that are HIV-positive and a sizeable portion of these people live in South Asia.

“One of the activities we conducted was passing a ball around behind our backs, and asking the children to guess who had the ball. The ball was a symbol of how luck plays a great hand in the contraction of HIV. We have further games which we use to showcase how HIV cannot be contracted from speaking or engaging with HIV victims,” says Thomas Jufri-Robson, from the Asian Sports Academy Foundation.

“I now am confident that I have the possibility of becoming a great cricket player in the future, if I continue to work hard and apply all the lessons I have learned this week.”

One of the most significant and crucial goals of the programme was to relate to children that there are alternatives to detrimental social behaviour such as intravenous drug usage.

Dipu Roy Chowdhury, former player of the Bangladesh cricket team, and one of the coaches on the grounds, said, “This initiative is very important, because it allows our children to realize that there are several others like them all over Bangladesh, and that they can become their community ambassadors and leaders about issues that truly matter.”

Jinnatul Nesa Pinky, aged 17 from Panchagar, agrees. “I live in a joint family of 23 children, and have seven brothers and sisters. I always wanted to play cricket, but until last year, I never thought I would be able to. Now, I am not only learning from world class coaches, but I cannot wait to bring the messages about both cricket and HIV back to our community.”

Pinky, who struggled with her bowling prior to the cricket clinic, adds, “I feel more confident now, and that is something all of us feel. Also, I now have friends from all over Bangladesh who also love cricket. We know that with our passion and knowledge for the sport, as well as the knowledge we have gained about life, we can go back to our communities and teach others, both about HIV, and about cricket.”

“How Cricket helps spread awareness about HIV

“The knowledge we have gained is very powerful, and it is not just limited to sports, but how we can be responsible human beings.”

Mong Achak, 15
Participants celebrate
International Women’s Day at UNIC

Youth – the future leaders of a nation

photo by: UNIC Dhaka
Our Parliament our Rights

Donna Bugby-Smith
UNDP

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that children have the right to be involved, in accordance with their evolving capacities, in decisions that affect them and to exercise growing responsibility for those decisions they are competent to take for themselves. However, in Bangladesh it is often said that widespread apathy exists among the younger generation towards political participation and parliamentary democracy.

Whether this fear is exaggerated or not, without doubt children and young people need to understand the principles, which underpin democracy and to develop the skills to use that knowledge effectively and be able to participate in appropriate forums. Youth engagement and involvement in democratic practices and principles is an apolitical issue and one that directly links to a democracy seeking to tackle key development challenges. These challenges become ever more important as the population of Bangladesh continues to increase. Therefore identifying mechanisms and platforms that will foster greater engagement and participation by young people and other marginalized groups will help to deepen and strengthen democracy in Bangladesh.

By listening to children’s voices and taking them into account in their work, parliaments can be more inclusive, craft more effective policies and secure greater respect for and better understanding about, children’s rights. In short, a parliament informed by children’s voices will be better informed about the needs of critical groups of citizens and will have a platform for enhanced and better democratic engagement. One method of assisting children and young people to understand these principles and for their voices to be heard is through a child parliament.

The principle behind a child parliament is that it is created by children and for children. Children themselves plan and implement the entire process using evidence based advocacy and seeking technical support from adults as needed. Through research analysis and discussions about child rights and related issues, children and young people present issues and recommendations for improvement to adult decision makers. Child parliaments are not an alternative to the national parliament but it is an apolitical entity of its own.

In 2014 the United Nations Development Programme collaborating with its partners Save the Children and the British Council will organize a child parliament event, which will include 154 child parliamentarians aged between 14-17 years who will have the opportunity to visit parliament and conduct committee and plenary activities in the precincts of the parliament.

One of the key objectives of the 2014 event will be to create long lasting and sustainable links between the Jatiyo Sangsad and child parliamentarians. The creation of such links and platforms for dialogue will help to nurture and strengthen the importance of young people becoming more active citizens in the context of a young and developing participatory democracy. In the longer term it is hoped that child parliament events will help inspire children and young people to aspire to be fully engaged in Bangladesh’s parliamentary democracy and help shape the future of Bangladesh.

The creation of links and platforms for dialogue will help nurture and strengthen the importance of young people becoming more active citizens in the context of a young and developing participatory democracy.
An Ever Expected Dream

SHUKANTA HALDER AKASH
19 years, student at University Dental College

A car driving over rough pavement. One of its wheels is huge and another one is small. So the car broke apart, but still has a long way to go. Let us think, the car is our society, the huge wheel are the men and the small wheel are the women. The rough way is the road to a fair and equal society. Now see, discrimination between men and women is the only reason binding us to go forward.

That is how Begum Roquia Sakhawat Hussain thought. She was born in 1880. She talked about gender equality during the age when women were expected to stay in the kitchen at the start of the 20th century. Begum Roquia told women not to break the “parduh” but to break their mental barriers. She always dreamt of equality. She wanted women to get their independence through education and employment and benefit from all the other advantages men have.

Many people tried to follow her dream— but not a lot has changed. Till today many women suffer from exploitation. They are not considered equal to men. But why? As Begum Roquia said, we could not change our tradition. So by birth, we consider women a lesser part of our society. And if we cannot change our practices, no movement can establish their rights. So it is high time for change. Let us change our beliefs and consider women as equals to men. Only then Sultana’s Dream (Roquia’s novel) will come true.

Trainings and events

Training on Information Literacy for High School Students

UNIC Dhaka and the Centre for Information Studies in Bangladesh have jointly started an information literacy training programme and campaign in Savar upazila in Dhaka district in January 2014. This programme follows the theme of the UN World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) and their major recommendation of narrowing the digital divide through the creation of a knowledge based information society.

It furthermore builds on the UNESCO slogan of life-long education and is based on New Zealand’s information literacy model.

The current literacy programme targets all the schools (around 50 schools) in Savar upazila. The two day long training accommodates 30 students from five different schools.

During practical and theoretical sessions greater knowledge of information sources and understanding is encouraged.

A separate session for UN information literacy is also organized in each programme that includes UN quiz contests, lectures about the work of the UN and its structure and activities. Certificates are awarded to students after successful completion of the training programme.
Participatory Filmmaking

UN REACH will be arranging a training in Participatory Filmmaking as a tool for advocacy in the coming weeks and would like to give a few selected youth leaders the opportunity to participate in this training. This training is aimed especially at youth active with local NGOs as well as nutritional advocates and engaged campaigners who are interested in learning a new tool and technique.

All those interested should submit a letter of motivation stating why they would like to participate and how this will help them in their work, furthermore please include information on your experience to date and the organization you work with.

UN Fellows Receive Scholarships to Study in European Universities

A study conducted by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization concluded that, by the year 2015 the ready made garment sector will need an additional 70,000 trained mid-level managers. To help meet this need international experts with both academic and industrial experience are invited to Bangladesh to expand and upgrade higher education, training programmes and methods; to train teachers and to directly train 6,000 technical and commercial managers by the end of 2014.

The training is intended for upper and mid-level management from industry or faculty members in the textile and garments sector. Apart from these trainings in Bangladesh, fellowships for university students in the sector, to deepen their knowledge and understanding by pursuing a postgraduate degree in a European university, have also been awarded as part of the scheme. UNIDO funded a number of fellowships to enable members of the faculties of Bangladesh institutions to pursue a Master’s degree at a European University. Five fellowships were awarded in 2012, four at the University of Bolton (UK) and one at Manchester Metropolitan University (UK). A sixth and final fellowship was awarded in 2013, to study for an MSc at the Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences (Germany). One of the fellows at Bolton, Mr. Kamrul Hasan, was awarded the university’s prestigious Vice-Chancellor’s Award to pursue a PhD programme at the university. The Fellows are pursuing Textile & Fashion related subjects so that they may return to Bangladesh and train the new workforce to develop the Ready Made Garments Sector of the Country.

To participate in the training or workshops or learn more about the Fellowship Programme, please contact: Shaheen Ismail.

Youth Leadership Summit: 11-13 June 2014, Dhaka.


GET INVOLVED IN THE UN YOUTH NEWSLETTER

The United Nations recognizes adolescent and youth activities.

Are you active in your community?
Do you care about your society and are you part of a group or organization working for young people?

We believe that young people have the potential, creativity and energy to change the pace of development: in a society in which the majority of the population is below 25 years, it is important to listen to the dreams of adolescent and youth on how to improve living conditions and contribute to a peaceful environment. Like you, many young people in Bangladesh are active in various organizations – be it as volunteers in their community, or as activists on a national level.

We would like to create a platform where you can exchange ideas and share experiences with other young people.

The United Nations in Bangladesh is publishing this newsletter for and by young people. If you are interested in being part of the newsletter development team, we invite you to send us an email detailing your motivation and experience and how you are engaged in your society at the moment. All applications should be sent to: unvbgd.bd@undp.org by the 30th of May 2014.

email Shaheen Ismail

GET INVOLVED IN THE UN YOUTH NEWSLETTER

The United Nations recognizes adolescent and youth activities.

Are you active in your community?
Do you care about your society and are you part of a group or organization working for young people?

We believe that young people have the potential, creativity and energy to change the pace of development: in a society in which the majority of the population is below 25 years, it is important to listen to the dreams of adolescent and youth on how to improve living conditions and contribute to a peaceful environment. Like you, many young people in Bangladesh are active in various organizations – be it as volunteers in their community, or as activists on a national level.

We would like to create a platform where you can exchange ideas and share experiences with other young people.

The United Nations in Bangladesh is publishing this newsletter for and by young people. If you are interested in being part of the newsletter development team, we invite you to send us an email detailing your motivation and experience and how you are engaged in your society at the moment. All applications should be sent to: unvbgd.bd@undp.org by the 30th of May 2014.

GET INVOLVED IN THE UN YOUTH NEWSLETTER
The United Nations Country Team (CT) recognizes that encouraging the full potential of young people is paramount to achieving long-term social change. Young people have a critical role to play in the economic and social development of their country, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. To support the full and effective participation of young people in all levels of civic life and to understand youth and adolescents from their own perspective and amplify their voices, the UN Youth and Adolescent Theme Group is in the process of establishing a UN Youth Advisory Panel (UNYAP). UNYAP will consist of 30 outstanding young people from Bangladesh, and function as a platform for the exchange of information between Bangladesh youth delegates and the UN Country Team.

Are you?

- Aged 15-30 years old and committed to the development, human rights and peace agenda of the United Nations?
- Able and willing to engage with the global UN youth leadership initiatives and establish effective connections between local, regional and global initiatives?
- Experienced in working with youth networks and the community?
- Endorsed by a youth service or youth-lead organization with a special interest and an advocacy base?
- Organized and a good team player, with a flexible working approach?
- Able to liaison and affiliate with differently structured organizations at the national, regional, and international levels, such as: governments, donor agencies, UN agencies, educational institutes, media, NGOs, etc.?
- Able to work well in a cross-cultural team and environment?
- Available to participate in meetings and activities in Dhaka?
- Gifted with strong interpersonal skills, with the ability to communicate clearly and concisely?
- A strong communicator (with skills in English an advantage)?
- Most importantly – do you have something to say about youth in Bangladesh?

If you - or someone you know - fulfill most or all of this criteria, please send your CV and a cover letter to unvbgd.bd@undp.org stating why you would like to be involved in the UN’s Youth Advisory Panel. Indicate your name, age, and your educational institution and/or organizational affiliation.

All applications should be sent by the 15th of June 2014.