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## PRESS RELEASE

### **U.S. AND BANGLADESH GOVERNMENTS LAUNCH PROJECT TO REDUCE MATERNAL MORTALITY**

**COX'S BAZAR, NOVEMBER 2** -- Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Shaikh Altaf Ali, Director General of Family Planning Mohammad Abdul Qayyum, and USAID Deputy Mission Director Carey N. Gordon launched a new pilot health project today that will reduce maternal mortality rates. Under this project, government and NGO field workers will distribute and administer Misoprostol—a medication that controls bleeding after delivery. This medication is especially important for home deliveries or where there are no trained birth attendants. The pilot program will be implemented in five upazilas in Cox's Bazar to identify the most effective ways to deliver and monitor this new treatment. This project will also raise awareness among health care providers and community members about pregnancy-related complications and will allow them to identify and treat these life-threatening conditions. The project will be implemented as part of the U.S. Government-funded \$12 million "Mayer Hashi" Program. The best practices learned through this pilot project will then be expanded throughout the country.

In Bangladesh, 85% of all deliveries occur at home and women risk serious complications or even death from post-partum hemorrhaging. This is mainly due to limited access to emergency health care facilities. Studies from a number of countries have shown that Misoprostol tablets can be safely used during home deliveries to prevent and treat severe bleeding. Misoprostol tablets are inexpensive, do not require special storage, and can easily be delivered at the community-level. Misoprostol is an important life-saving medication, especially in places where there are no other remedies available to prevent or treat postpartum hemorrhaging.

The U.S. Government, through USAID, is working to improve the lives of the people of Bangladesh, especially the very poor. USAID administers programs in Bangladesh in five broad areas: improving health and pre-primary education, creating income opportunities for rural poor, supporting good governance, enhancing food security, and strengthening disaster preparedness and providing emergency assistance following natural disasters. The U.S. Government has provided more than \$5 billion in assistance to Bangladesh since 1971. In 2009, U.S. assistance will total about \$180 million.

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**GR/2009**

Note: *A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: [DhakaPA@state.gov](mailto:DhakaPA@state.gov); Website: [http:// dhaka.usembassy.gov](http://dhaka.usembassy.gov)*