



## Report on Official National Launch Program of Aponjon

**Event:** National Launch of Aponjon

**Date:** 18 December 2012

**Venue:** Osmani Memorial Hall, Dhaka

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## Introduction:

Aponjon (means: *the dear one*) is a health information service for expecting and new mothers through mobile phone. It is a public-private partnership under the initiative of Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action (MAMA). MAMA is one of the global health initiatives of US President Barack Obama. MAMA was launched by US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011, to be implemented in Bangladesh, India and South Africa. This initiative has brought together Johnson and Johnson (an American multinational medical equipment and pharmaceuticals manufacturer), the UN Foundation (which links UN activities with other NGOs/corporate bodies), and Baby Centre LLC (a pregnancy and parenting website) to disseminate health information to expectant and new mothers through mobile phones. In Bangladesh, MAMA is implemented and coordinated by D.Net.

By dissemination these essential health messages through mobile phones in Bangladesh, *Aponjon* will contribute to a reduction in maternal and newborn deaths by encouraging mothers and their family members to be informed of necessary health conditions and avail relevant healthcare services, when necessary. The service design of *Aponjon* does not only include pregnant and new mothers, but also comprises gatekeepers like husbands, mothers, and mothers-in-law. By 2015, more than 3 million women and family members will be benefitted by *Aponjon's* services. The pro-poor design of the service will ensure poorest 20% of the subscribers will receive the service free of costs. This IVR and SMS based service can be accessed and be registered by calling 16227 (the short code for Aponjon service) on Grameenphone, Banglalink, Robi and Airtel mobile networks

## Aponjon National Launch Program:

'Aponjon' was launched nationwide through a grand launching ceremony on 18 December, 2012. It is now providing the first nation-wide mobile phone health information service in Bangladesh with a promise of taking care of mothers and children.



The launching was done in Dhaka at *Osmani Memorial Hall*, through a ceremony inaugurated by Dr. AFM Ruhul Haque, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh and Mr. Richard Greene,

Mission Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Bangladesh mission. Among the other guests, Ms. Kirsten Gagnaire, Global Director of MAMA, Md Humayun Kabir, Senior secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and other high officials of the Government, Global, national and corporate partners, were there to witness this great event and state their good wishes and support.

The event was attended by more than 500 guests including about 150 high officials from the offices of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other government offices and agencies. A total of 63 journalists from different print and electronic media were present for the coverage of the Aponjon National launch program.



Photo 3: A part of the audience

#### Details of the event:

Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. A F M Ruhul Haque was the chief guest of the event, which was presided over by Md. Humayun Kabir, Senior Secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.



Photo 4: Guests on the stage during the launching

The Special Guests present were, Dr. Capt. (Rtd.) Mozibur Rahman Fakir, MP, State Minister of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Md. Nazrul Islam Khan, Secretary of Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and National Project Director of A2I Program at the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Richard Greene, Mission Director of USAID, Bangladesh Mission and Mr. Rabbur Reza, Chief of Operations of Beximco

Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Other guests present were, Ms. Kirsten Gagnaire, Global Director of MAMA, Prof. Dr. Khondhaker Md. Shefayetullah, Director General of DGHS, Mr. Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor of A2I Program at Prime Minister's Office and Dr. Ananya Raihan, Executive Director of D.Net.

- The Program began with the guests taking their seats on the stage and recitation from the Holy Quran.
- Up next, Mr. Anir Chowdhury gave the opening speech of the program
- Mr. Anir Chowdhury's speech was followed by a short video on Aponjon.



Photo 5: Dr. Ananya Raihan giving his keynote speech

- After the Aponjon video, Dr. Ananya Raihan, Executive Director of D.Net took the guests through a journey of Aponjon since the inception of pilot through his keynote presentation.



Photo 6: Mr. Richard Greene giving his speech

Mr. Richard Greene, Mission Director of USAID Bangladesh

- Speech from Md. Nazrul Islam Khan, Secretary of Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
- Speech from Mr. Rabbur Reza, Chief of Operations of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
- Speech from Dr. Capt. (Rtd.) Mozibur Rahman Fakir, MP,

- The speech was followed up by speech from Prof. Dr. Khondhaker Md. Shefayetullah, Director General of DGHS
- Then, Ms. Kirsten Gagnaire, Global Director of MAMA gave her speech, followed by,

- Speech from

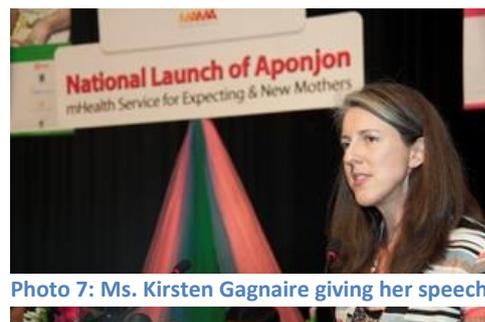


Photo 7: Ms. Kirsten Gagnaire giving her speech

State Minister of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

- After the speeches, as a part of the ceremony, the health minister personally registered a pregnant mother on stage, who is now receiving the service free of cost. This gesture was made to express Aponjon's mission statement of reaching out to the poorest communities in remote areas of the country at free of cost. The registration process was



Photo 8: Dr. A F M Ruhul Haque giving his speech

complemented by an animated video with the registration process for the audience.

- Afterwards, The Chief Guest of the Evening, Prof. Dr. A F M Ruhul Haque handed the Aponjon crest to all guests on the dais.
- The crest-giving was followed by the speech from the chief guest, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. A F M Ruhul Haque, who also declared the 'Aponjon' service open at national level.
- Finally, Md. Humayun Kabir, Senior Secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare gave his concluding speech to end the program.



Photo 9: Meet the Press session

- At the end of the program, Md Humayun Kabir, Senior Secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Mr. Richard Greene, Mission Director of USAID Bangladesh, Ms. Kirsten Gagnaire, Global Director of MAMA and Dr. Ananya Raihan,

Executive Director of D.Net joined the journalists present for a 'Meet the Press' session where they answered questions from the press.

**Conclusion:**

The launch of Aponjon has signified a major step for the global Mobile Alliance for Maternal Action (MAMA) project, as Bangladesh is the first to take the mobile health messaging services to the national scale. Soon, the MAMA project will go national in India and South Africa as well.

The team of Aponjon is excited to be on this journey of transforming ways of people accessing information on maternal and child health. Aponjon is already in action, and just around the corner, to reach countless homes very soon.