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**TRIP REPORT:
VISIT TO BANGLADESH TO WORK ON
THE LOCAL INITIATIVE PROGRAM**

March 30 - April 11, 1993

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FAMILY PLANNING MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

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I. SUMMARY

This was my first trip to Bangladesh as the newly appointed Regional Director for Asia/Near East. The visit had two objectives: to become further oriented to the goals, objectives, and activities of the Local Initiative Program (LIP) through meetings with FPMD/Dhaka staff as well as visits to the field; and to address work planning and technical assistance needs of the current and planned follow-on LIP. While the bulk of the visit was spent working on the LIP, I also coordinated with Dhaka-based Cooperating Agencies regarding FPMD regional activities in Asia.

II. BACKGROUND

Since May 1987, the Local Initiative Program (LIP), launched initially as the Upazila Initiatives Project (UIP) under USAID's Family Planning and Health Services Project, has been operating to improve the performance of the national family planning program at the grassroots level through strengthening of the management capability of the thana family planning staff and local leaders.

The project is designed to enable the Government of Bangladesh family planning staff at the thana level and below to increase their effectiveness in offering high quality, sustainable family planning services to a greater proportion of eligible couples. Over the past five years, LIP has assisted the national family planning program to introduce a decentralized management system at the thana level and below. Sixty-seven thanas are currently covered by the project. Through an innovative package of carefully-tailored training, technical assistance, and small grants, LIP has developed high-level support and local commitment for management teams, and has introduced management skills in planning, implementation, and monitoring. Local management teams have strengthened overall community participation in program activities and have promoted greater accountability for program performance.

LIP has been implemented under a series of buy-ins from USAID/Dhaka to the Family Planning Management Development (FPMD) Project as well as to its predecessor project, Family Planning Management Training (FPMT). FPMT and, currently, FPMD, have subcontracted with Technical Assistance, Inc. (TAI), a local organization, to establish a FPMD/Dhaka program office. This office implements the LIP, with technical and administrative support from FPMD/Boston.

III. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF WORK

The primary purpose of this trip was to become further oriented to LIP. Along with the Cooperating Agency/Non-Governmental Organization (CA/NGO) Project in Bangladesh, LIP is the largest and most important project in the portfolio of FPMD's Asia/Near East region. I was appointed to FPMD as the Regional Director for the Asia/Near East in mid-January 1993. In view of the size, complexity, and significance of

the LIP, it was important for me to travel to Bangladesh early in my tenure at FPMD to learn more about the project, its technical activities and needs, as well as to develop my working relationship with Mr. Abu Sayeed, the President of TAI and Program Director of LIP, and the FPMD/Dhaka office project staff. Moreover, funding for the current LIP is about to end, and the next phase of LIP, under a new buy-in from USAID/Dhaka, is expected to begin August 1. There were thus many critical programmatic, technical, and administrative issues to review and discuss related to work planning for the balance of the current project, and preparing for the start-up of the new project.

I also used this opportunity to coordinate with the Association for Voluntary Surgical Contraception (AVSC) Dhaka-based regional office staff on AVSC/FPMD Asia regional activities. Additional regional coordination meetings were held with Pathfinder Asia/Near East regional office staff who were in Bangladesh for a Pathfinder-sponsored workshop. Moreover, contact was made with the Population Council's (PC) Asia Operations Research Project representative based in Dhaka concerning PC/FPMD activities in Nepal.

IV. ACTIVITIES

A. LIP

During the period March 30 - April 11, I met daily with Mr. Sayeed. I also had the opportunity to meet periodically with Mr. Sayeed during April 11 - 28, although the primary focus of my work during this period was a team assignment to develop plans for the CA/NGO Project.

The following general and specific topics were reviewed and discussed with Mr. Sayeed and FPMD/Dhaka staff:

- The goals, objectives, and activities of the LIP;
- The structure of the Government of Bangladesh national family planning program, and the relationship and contribution of LIP to the national goals;
- LIP monitoring, supervision, reporting, and technical assistance tools and systems;
- MSH—TAI contractual issues;
- Work planning for technical assistance and program activities under the continuation LIP, to be funded under a new buy-in from USAID/OPH;

- Work planning for technical assistance and support from the FPMD Publication and Communications, Operations, and Asia/Near East Units under the current and the new LIP;
- Planning for Mr. Sayeed's visit to Boston, May 8 - 26, 1993.

In addition, during April 5 - 11, Mr. Jaime Benavente, Director of FPMD's Evaluation Unit, was in-country to work with Mr. Sayeed and FPMD/Dhaka staff on specific components of the evaluation strategy for the current LIP. I participated in the meetings and discussions with Mr. Benavente and Mr. Sayeed, including debriefings with USAID staff.

April 2 - 4 I travelled to Khulna along with Mr. Sayeed, several FPMD/Dhaka staff, and Mr. David Piet of USAID/OPH to attend a workshop arranged by the Khulna District Administration with technical assistance from FPMD/Dhaka. The workshop was entitled: "Role of Union Parishad Chairman in Family Planning/Maternal Child Health Program Management: A LIP Approach". The workshop was organized by the Khulna Deputy Commissioner and his office on his own initiative, in response to the success of LIP activities in three unions of Fultala thana near the city of Khulna. The objective of the workshop was to orient all Union Parishad Chairmen in the thana, primarily those from unions which are not now involved in LIP, to the background, goals, and objectives of LIP, and to the project's unique and effective approach to strengthening the management of family planning activities at the local level with effective community participation.

Attendance at the workshop afforded me a wonderful opportunity to increase my knowledge and understanding of LIP -- to see LIP "in action." The workshop was a tremendous success for all concerned. It generated a lot of enthusiasm for LIP, and more importantly, resulted in renewed expressions of commitment on the part of local government officials and government family planning providers, both those involved and not involved in LIP, to strengthening the management and performance of family planning activities in the area.

In addition to attending the workshop, I travelled to a village in Fultala thana to meet with the Family Welfare Assistant (FWA) and community volunteers who are assisting the FWAs in village-level family planning service delivery. We discussed their involvement in family planning activities, the impact of their participation on their role and status in the community and as women, and the achievements and problems they encounter providing information and education about family planning in their communities. The volunteers displayed the "ELCO" (eligible couple) maps they had made. ELCO maps are simple, pictorial tools which help the volunteers manage their work, and which also aid the FWAs to monitor and supervise the volunteers' work and changes in the method mix among family planning acceptors. The ELCO map is a basic management tool introduced into the national family planning program by LIP.

B. REGIONAL COORDINATION

I met with AVSC/Dhaka regional office staff on two occasions. First with Mr. Ahmed Al Kabir, Senior Program Manager, and later with Ms. Nancy Piet-Pelon, Regional Director; Mr. Moslehuddin Ahmed, Program Manager; and Ms. Jane Wickstrom, Assistant Regional Director for Asia who is based at AVSC/New York. The purpose of these coordination meetings was to discuss FPMD Asia regional activities, notably FPMD's new program in Nepal where we hope to collaborate with AVSC on a situational analysis exercise with the Family Planning Association of Nepal. Ms. Piet-Pelon and I also briefly discussed the outcome of the FPMD team's work with AVSC country office staff and the other Cooperating Agencies in the preparation of scopes of work and an implementation plan for the CA/NGO project.

I also met with Dr. Turkiz Gokgol and Dr. Bob Timmons, the Pathfinder Regional Director for Asia, and the Director for Technical Services, who were in Dhaka for a workshop organized by Pathfinder/Dhaka. I briefed the Pathfinder staff on the objectives of the CA/NGO Project, and we broached the possibility of the Asia Regional Office making Pathfinder staff available to collaborate on technical assistance to the Project. We also discussed Pathfinder's new program in Indonesia as well as possible opportunities for collaboration in Turkey.

Finally, I made contact with Mr. Peter Miller, Deputy Director of the Population Council's Asia Operations Research Project, to discuss the status of the Council's plans to organize a situational analysis study in Nepal.

A review of activities are specified in the following annexes: Annex I contains the list of organizations and persons contacted; and Annex II is the schedule of meetings.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Work planning for the current and new LIP initiated in Dhaka will continue during Mr. Sayeed's visit to Boston, May 8 - 26. Final agreements on technical assistance from various FPMD Units will be reached, and schedules for visits to the field will be determined. Moreover, plans for my next visit to the field will be finalized.

ANNEX I:

ORGANIZATIONS AND PERSONS CONTACTED

USAID/Dhaka, Office of Health and Population

Bill Goldman, Director
David Piet, Deputy Director
Alan Foose, Population Officer
Belayet Hossain, Program Specialist
Rob Cunnane, Population Officer

FPMD/Dhaka

Abu Sayeed, Program Director
Ahmedul Ghani, Senior Program Specialist
S.K. Zaman, Senior Program Officer
Mohammed Ali Bhuiyan, Senior Program Officer
A.H. Sikder, Program Officer
F.M. Mostaque, Program Officer
Emad Uddin, Program Officer
Shabbir Ahmed, Program Officer
Badruddin Khan, Finance Manager
Farid Uddin, Internal Auditor
Farhad Hossain, Administrative Officer
Asiur Rahman, Executive Secretary
Rainul Haque, Secretary
Maksuda Begum, Secretary
Prosanto Sinha, Receptionist

AVSC

Nancy Piet-Pelon, Regional Director/Asia
Ahmed Al-Kabir, Senior Program Manager
Moslehuddin Ahmed, Program Manager
Jane Wickstrom, Assistant Regional Director/Asia

Pathfinder

Turkiz Gokgol, MD, Regional Vice-President, Asia and Near East
Demet Gural, MD, Associate Regional Director, Asia and Near East
Robert J. Timmons, PhD, Regional Director for Technical Services, Asia and Near East
M. Alauddin, Country Director, Bangladesh

Population Council

Peter Miller, Deputy Director, Asia Operations Research Project

Government of Bangladesh

Abdul Muktedir Chowdhury, Divisional Commissioner, Khulna Division
Kazi Reazul Haque, Deputy Commissioner, Khulna
M.A. Rahman, Director of Family Planning, Khulna Division
Asadur Rahman, Deputy Director of Family Planning, Khulna
Khalilur Rahman, Thana Nirbahi Officer, Fultala Thana
Ziarul Islam, Thana Family Planning Officer, Fultala Thana

ANNEX II:

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

- March 30: · Arrive Dhaka
- March 31: · Briefing at USAID
· Meeting with Mr. Sayeed: general orientation to LIP
- April 1: · Meeting with Mr. Sayeed: general orientation to FPMD office procedures and LIP monitoring, supervision, and reporting procedures
- April 2: · Travel to Khulna
- April 3: · Workshop on Role of Union Parishad Chairmen
- April 4: · Return to Dhaka
· Meeting with Mr. Sayeed on financial management issues
- April 5: · Meeting with Mr. Sayeed: work planning for LIP publications
· Coordination meeting with AVSC regional office
- April 6: · Meeting with FPMD/Dhaka staff: orientation to technical assistance activities
- April 7: · Meeting with Mr. Sayeed: work planning for new LIP project activities and FPMD/Boston technical assistance
- April 8: · Meeting with Mr. Sayeed: reviewed funding and budgetary issues for current and new LIP
- April 9 and 10: Weekend
- April 11: · Meeting at USAID
· Work planning for LIP evaluation activities