

for Bangladesh
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Jenni R. Engebretsen
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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dhaka, Bangladesh)

Immediate Release For
March 20, 2000

FACT SHEET

HELPING TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR AND
IMPROVE THE LIVES OF WORKING PEOPLE IN BANGLADESH

President Clinton today announced an assistance package of over \$14 million to expand upon the progress already made by the government and the people of Bangladesh to keep children out of factories and enrolled in school. Since 1995, approximately 9,000 children have left jobs in garment factories to attend schools established by a U.S. funded project of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC). This new joint initiative with the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Government of Bangladesh, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will remove additional children from abusive work and improve working conditions in Bangladesh. The initiative includes:

- \$8.6 million to reduce abusive child labor by removing approximately 30,000 children from hazardous industries in Bangladesh and placing them in school;
- \$1.7 million for a regional project to stop trafficking of children;
- \$3 million to improve working conditions for women through skills training and worker rights, and a new health insurance program for working women in rural areas; and
- \$1 million to raise health and safety standards for hazardous work.

Eliminating Abusive Child Labor

- The \$8.6 million in child labor assistance that the President announced today will fund additional IPEC projects targeted to Bangladesh children involved in exploitative or hazardous industries.
- Approximately 30,000 children now working in the construction, shrimp, and leather industries, on tea plantations, as cigarette and glass bangles makers, or as domestic servants, scavengers, transport helpers and weavers will be able to go from work to school.

- The U.S. is the world's largest contributor to IPEC, accounting for 57% of contributions last year.

Stopping the Trafficking of Children

- An unknown number of children, especially girls, are trafficked each year into exploitative work. Many end up in sexual slavery, forced labor or domestic servitude.
- The President's \$1.7 million regional project will enable the ILO to help prevent trafficking of children from Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, while assisting in the rescue and rehabilitation of those who fall prey to traffickers.

Improving Working Conditions for Women

- Women in Bangladesh are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and occupational safety and health hazards because of their concentration in the least protected informal sectors and their lower educational and skill levels.
- Low wages, irregular payment, and lack of job security all add to the exploitative conditions which women often face.
- The President's \$3 million initiative will establish a micro-health insurance program for approximately 3 million women in rural, informal sector jobs who traditionally have not had access to any form of health insurance.
- Projects also will focus on improving working conditions for women, and by working through the ILO, increase their participation and representation in trade unions, and enhance their skills through training.

Raising Health and Safety Standards for Hazardous Work

- The President's \$1 million initiative involves a collaboration of the U.S. Department of Labor and relevant Bangladeshi Ministries, employers, and worker organizations to enhance health and safety standards in hazardous occupational sectors.
- Projects will address, among other things, the hazards posed by chemicals, fumes, and dangerous machinery in the leather industry and the risk of fire and other hazards faced by garment workers.

President Clinton's Budget for Child Labor and Core Labor Standards

The Administration's FY 2001 budget illustrates its continuing commitment to eliminating child labor and raising core labor standards by providing:

- \$110 million, more than double last year's level of \$45 million, to help eliminate the scourge of child labor; and
- Over \$40 million to promote the implementation of core labor standards and improve working conditions around the world.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dhaka, Bangladesh)

For Immediate Release

March 20, 2000

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO PEOPLE OF JOYPURA

United States Embassy
Dhaka, Bangladesh

3:50 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. First let me say to the Prime Minister how delighted I am to be here in Bangladesh, and how much I have enjoyed meeting today with all the people from Joypura. I thank you, Asia, for your teaching. I thank Hasan Abed and the other people who are involved in the BRAC Movement. I thank my longtime friend, Muhammad Yunus, for bringing his people here today who are associated with the Grameen Bank. And I'd also like to thank the people who came with the Asrayon Project that the Prime Minister has founded. Thank you all for making me feel welcome today.

Bangladesh is a country that, by traditional economic measurement, is still poor. But as I saw today, in terms of the spirit and the ability of the people, it is full of riches. And the challenge we all face is how to unlock the ability -- the brains, the heart, the spirit of the people of Bangladesh -- beginning with the wonderful children that I have seen, but also including the people that I met with the Asrayon Project and the people who have participated in the Grameen Bank. (Applause.)

I want my fellow Americans and people throughout the world to know that the people of Bangladesh are a good investment in the future. If you look only at the Grameen Bank, it has 2.4 million borrowers in 39,000 villages. Ninety-four percent of the borrowers are women, 98 percent of the loans are repaid. And now, with loans for people to buy cell phones, entire villages are being brought into the Information Age. I want people throughout the world to know this story. (Applause.)

I want to thank the Prime Minister and the people involved in the Asrayon movement for setting a goal that no person in this country should be homeless. That should be every nation's goal. (Applause.) And I want to thank the teachers and the supporters of the BRAC School for showing us that all our children can learn and they all deserve the chance to learn.

I also want to thank your government and industry for working with the International Labor Organization and the United States to take some 9,000 children out of garment factories and put them in classrooms. There are children here today, including a group from a special ILO-supported school that our United States Senator Tom Harkin told me about, that he visited two years ago. I thank you for doing that, as well.

I want to continue to support all these projects. I am pleased to announce today that the United States will commit several million dollars to help another 30,000 Bangladeshi children move from work in hazardous industries into schools that will give them safer, better futures. (Applause.)

We will work with the ILO and Grameen to help 3 million women in rural areas gain access to micro health insurance. And we will commit several million dollars to help women get new skills, improve working conditions, and secure fair representation in trade organizations.

We will also provide several million dollars to support another Grameen program, a solar cell program to use the clean energy of the sun to generate power in villages throughout Bangladesh -- cheap power, clean power, power that will empower all kinds of people to raise their incomes in different ways in the next few years. (Applause.)

I would like to make just two points in closing. First of all, I want to bring greetings from my wife who preceded me to Bangladesh. She and our daughter came here a few years ago. And she told me of all the good things that were going on here, and she urged me to have the United States do more to support the Grameen Bank, to support your government, to support efforts to unleash the ability of your children and your families to build a better future.

And, finally, I would like to thank all of you who shared your stories with me today. Many of you have overcome great obstacles in your lives. Many of you still face great challenges. But you convinced me again that no one -- no one -- should believe that poverty is destiny, that people have to remain poor, that their children cannot learn and do better. You have made me believe more strongly than ever that every child in this world should be given the chance to dream and to live those dreams. (Applause.)

Because I have been privileged to be President of the United States, I have traveled all over the world. I have met with the wealthiest and most powerful people in the world. I have been in the most successful communities in the world. I have also been in the poorest villages of Africa, of Asia, of Latin America. And I believe, more strongly today than ever, that intelligence and ability and a human spirit are evenly distributed across the rich and the poor, in every continent on Earth. (Applause.)

And everyone must have a chance. Every little boy and every little girl must have a chance. I will do what I can to be a good partner and a good friend in that endeavor in Bangladesh.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END 4:05 P.M. (L)

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dhaka, Bangladesh)

For Immediate Release

March 20, 2000

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT CLINTON
AND PRESIDENT AHMED
IN EXCHANGE OF TOASTS

Bangabhawan
Dhaka, Bangladesh

8:20 P.M. (L)

PRESIDENT AHMED: Excellencies, distinguished guests, this is an historic occasion for us, being the first ever visit of the President of the United States of America to Bangladesh, and it presents an extraordinary event that will remain indelible in the memories of the people of Bangladesh.

Your visit is not only a testimony to the friendly ties between our two countries, but it is also a reflection of our shared values manifest in our deep commitment to democracy and rule of law. I am sure that, despite your short visit, you had an interesting time, and your fruitful discussion with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would be the harbinger of a new era in our relationship that will be mutually beneficial.

Mr. President, Bangladesh attaches great importance to its relationship with the United States. Our two countries are bound by friendship that, over the years, have gained in depth, dimension and content. Our people hold the people of the government of the United States in great esteem for their commitment to freedom, democracy and the dignity of human beings, as well as for their sincere efforts to put a human face in interstate and global relationship, who stresses human rights, empowerment of the disadvantaged sections of the society, including women in cases of employment opportunities.

Mr. President, America indeed is an indispensable participant in any effort to tackle global problems. It is also fortunate to have an extraordinary leader and a statesman of your stature as President. You have given America about eight years of unprecedented growth and prosperity through your dynamic leadership. You have given America a bold and decisive leadership which has helped defuse tension and reduce conflict in the world over. You have reinvented government and revived the American spirit, which will be catalytic in shaping what you call the 21st century American revolution, with opportunity for all and responsibility from all.

We also admire your bold and dynamic leadership and your genuine efforts to advance the cause of peace and stability throughout the world. We recall with gratitude the support and solidarity the United States has shown to our people during the disastrous flood in 1998. We are indeed grateful to you, Mr. President, for deep concern for the welfare of the people of Bangladesh.

Mr. President, in keeping with our commitment to fulfill the dreams of the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Mujibur Rahman, the government has undertaken policies and programs for the rapid economic development of the country on the basis of good governance and transparency.

Top priority has been placed on market reforms, deregulation of the economy and foreign investment. Indeed, our objective, and if I might add, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's passion, has been economic development with a human face that empowers women, caters to the education of the children, and cares for the elderly, the vulnerable and the weak.

The government has undertaken specific programs to provide pension to elderly male and female; a rehabilitation scheme for distressed women and street children, which has had a positive impact on poverty alleviation. The achievements of Bangladesh in areas like the microfinancing shelter for the poor, health and family planning, and literacy similarly have been acclaimed worldwide.

Mr. President, I am happy to say that Bangladesh today had earned the admiration of the international community for its commitments to peace and stability, and its moderate and rational position on issues and events.

Bangladesh has been catalytic in the establishment of South Asian Association for the Regional Cooperation. It is the spokesman for the LDC countries. It is the first to sign and ratify the CTBT in South Asia. It is a member of the United Nations Security Council. It will be hosting the Non-Aligned Summit in Dhaka next year.

Mr. President, we are determined to create a sona bungla -- that is gold in Bengali -- by our people who will enjoy a good quality of life in an atmosphere of peace and prosperity. However, in our march to our destiny, we seek the support of friends; we seek the support of the United States of America. I am sure the government and the great people of the United States of America would stand by our side.

Before I conclude, may I once again thank you, Mr. President, for visiting Bangladesh. Excellencies and distinguished guests, may I now request you to join me in a toast to the health, happiness and long life of his excellency President Bill Clinton; to the enduring friendship between Bangladesh and the United States; to the health of all the distinguished guests present here. Thank you. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Excellent statement. (Applause.)

Mr. President, Prime Minister, distinguished guests, this has been a day of extraordinary hospitality, insight and discovery for us. On behalf of the American delegation, I thank you for all you have done to make us feel at home.

For five years now, my wife and daughter have been singing the glories of Bangladesh. Finally, I am glad to see for myself. This day has been a watershed for both our nations. Americans admire Bangladesh as a proud Muslim nation, devoted to peace with its neighbors, to peacekeeping around the world, to tolerance and diversity within its borders. When the great Bengali writer, Rabindranath Tagore, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, he said this: I am glad I have done some work to give expression to this great age when the East and the West are coming together.

Although he did not live to see the creation of Bangladesh, Tagore doubtless would be proud of all you have done to lead your people into a new century. I believe he would also approve of what we did today to bring the East and the West closer together.

I was deeply gratified this morning to be the first American President to arrive in Bangladesh, and I am proud of the kind of partnership we are forging. It is about more than the ceremony of a state visit. It is about promoting democracy and the values that give

meaning to our lives. It is about helping children stay in school and have a better future. About investing in people who have never been given a chance to succeed before, and investing in a nation that now has a chance to succeed as never before.

Tomorrow the sun will rise on a deeper friendship between America and Bangladesh. Through our ceremonies and our conversations, we have hastened the arrival of a more peaceful new day -- the kind of day that Tagore spent his life imagining. A new day comprehending not only the absence of war and suffering, but the presence of mutual understanding and common endeavors.

On behalf of all Americans, I pledge that we will work with you to build on this good day, to soften the hard facts of daily hardship, to make real the poetry of our finest aspirations.

I ask you now to join me in a toast to the President, the Prime Minister, the people of Bangladesh and the friendship between our two nations. May it grow. May it deepen. May it affect the lives of our people in ways that are truly good.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

(A toast is offered.) (Applause.)

END

8:32 P.M. (L)

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Dhaka, Bangladesh)

For Immediate Release

March 20, 2000

PRESS BRIEFING BY
USAID ADMINISTRATOR BRADY ANDERSON

Pan-Pacific Sonargon Hotel
Dhaka, Bangladesh

4:55 P.M. (L)

MR. HAMMER: Good afternoon. The first briefing that we're going to have today is by the Administrator for the United States Agency for International Development, Brady Anderson, who will talk about some of AID's programs here in the region.

ADMINISTRATOR ANDERSON: Thank you. Good afternoon. I want to start out by thanking the people of the village of Joypura, who were so gracious to allow us to relocate the village event that the President was going to attend from the village of Joypura to the U.S. Embassy. The President was very disappointed that he was not able to go to the village of Joypura, but the people of Joypura were very kind to come to him. And he had a lot of time with them, and he had time to ask a lot of questions and learn about their lives and the challenges they face.

We've had a very productive day. The President, as you know, announced several United States Agency for International Development initiatives. Highlights would include the \$50-million South Asia regional initiative, which is a power and clean energy initiative for the region, including Bangladesh, India and Nepal. It will encourage cooperation among the three nations in the energy sector.

The President also announced a \$30-million clean energy initiative for the country of Bangladesh alone, to enable this country to privatize, to examine ways in which they can be more efficient at their energy production. He also announced a \$4-million grant to the Grameen-Shakti organization, which is a sister of the Grameen Bank in this country of microenterprise fame. And that grant will enable small borrowers to borrow money and purchase small solar power for their homes and their small businesses, like sewing and that sort of thing.

Also, \$97 million in food assistance for the people of Bangladesh, a large part of which will be through programs operated by the World Vision, an American NGO here. Also, the President announced a debt for nature swap which will be under the new Tropical Rain Forest Conservation Act.

Additionally, the President drew attention to the very important issues in this region of child labor and trafficking of women and children. He announced \$3 million will be spent for education and skills training for women and girls who have been exploited, and \$1 million for NGOs and the government of Bangladesh to prevent trafficking -- sort of bringing a network of government and NGOs together in this country who want to prevent the trafficking of women.

Americans are a very generous people, and Bangladesh represents one of USAID's largest assistance programs in the world, totally in this

year about \$88 million. All around the world, U.S. assistance emphasizes the dignity and the world of individuals, helping provide an environment in which individuals can find opportunity for social and economic growth.

The government of Bangladesh has made enormous strides in tackling the very difficult issue of population growth by bringing the total fertility rate down from 6.6 25 years ago, to 3.3 today. The government of Bangladesh has strengthened its democracy and worked to raise the status of women, and reduce child labor. And they have been pioneering in their role in development with their inception of the Grameen Bank.

Discussions and agreements today will help rural communities make use of the sun, to provide electricity for their homes and their small businesses. They will help Bangladesh to provide considerably increased clean power for domestic use. And they will help create a setting for South Asia neighbors to mutually consider the increasing need and opportunity for regional cooperation in the energy field.

Increasingly, environment and economic opportunities occur both within a country and across borders, and our assistance specifically recognizes this reality in South Asia.

Thank you.

Q Is all this money the President's to commit? Or does it require any congressional approval?

ADMINISTRATOR ANDERSON: This money's been appropriated by the Congress.

Q Can you help summarize -- we're giving \$88 million this year. How much total was announced? And is that on top of the \$88 million?

ADMINISTRATOR ANDERSON: How much total was that --

Q How much total was announced to date?

ADMINISTRATOR ANDERSON: The \$88 million would have to be added in with all the other -- the \$50 million, the \$30 million, the \$4 million --

Q And all that up to date, how much -- I was writing it down, but I'm not sure I --

ADMINISTRATOR ANDERSON: Yes -- \$200 million. It all went -- the \$88 million will be spent in one year. The \$50 million, which is a regional program, including Nepal, India and Bangladesh, is a four-year program, for example. The \$30 million for clean energy in Bangladesh is also a multiyear program. The \$88 million is distinct from that, includes food aid -- about half of it, or a little bit less than half of that is food aid.

Q I guess what I'm saying, I have -- I counted up over \$80 million announced to date. Is that your figure?

ADMINISTRATOR ANDERSON: Yes. In addition to the \$88 million.

Q In the context of the cross-border cooperation, I think there's an element of encouraging private sector cooperation across the border. Can you explain, develop that for us a little bit?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. It's both -- it provides -- I mean, we encourage here and a lot of places in the world, in developing countries, privatization of the power system. And that would open it up

to companies in Bangladesh or India who would like to invest, or American companies or others -- Europeans or others -- who would like to invest in the power sector. When the power sector is broken down to its various component parts and sold, the government can then realize the greatest benefit from it.

So the regional concept is, bring privatization, bring private capital because the governments are just not going to have the money, and the government of Bangladesh will not have enough money to really develop the natural gas that they need to. It's going to require private capital. So they're going to need the kind of environment with policy and regulations that this initiative will help them formulate both here and in the region to attract private capital. Because the private companies are not going to come in unless they think they can make a profit. And we believe that doing it regionally is the only way that's going to attract the private capital.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END 5:05 P.M. (L)