

**Project Information**

- Country: People's Republic of Bangladesh
- Project Name: Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) and Health System Improvement Project (Japanese ODA Loan)
- Cooperation Period: 2015–2021
- Implementing Organization: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

**1. Background and Project Summary**

The maternal and child health (MCH) indicators of Bangladesh, such as neonatal mortality rate, under-five mortality rate and maternal mortality rate, have improved to some extent. Low rates of receiving antenatal care and deliveries with skilled birth attendants (SBAs), however, still remain major challenges.

Under such circumstances, JICA implemented "Safe Motherhood Promotion Project Phase I & Phase II (Technical Cooperation)" from 2006 through 2016. Another project, "Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) Improvement Project (Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Development Program: HPNSDP) Phase I (ODA Loan)" was also carried out from 2011 through 2014.

Following the previous phase, this project continues to aim to improve MCH services and enhance the health system by supporting the improvement of MCH activities that serve the purpose of the program and services provided by medical institutions at all levels, thereby contributing to improved health of people of Bangladesh.

**2. Situation of Maternal and Child Health in Bangladesh from the Gender Perspective**

In addition to the lack of knowledge of pregnant women themselves, as well as their families, on MCH, one of the major reasons for the low rates of receiving antenatal care and deliveries with SBAs, serious MCH challenges in the country, could be the low status of women in the society. Decisions on family matters are normally made by husbands and/or by in-laws. Wives usually have no say in the family. For women to get health and medical services including antenatal care, it is necessary to not only reach out to the women themselves, but also to appeal to their families as well as involve the overall community in fostering the sense of protecting women's health.

**3. Gender-responsive Activities**

The following describes the outlines and impacts of specific activities in the past and what this project is doing:

**(1) Establishment of the "Narsingdi Model"**

"Safe Motherhood Promotion Project Phase I" established the "Narsingdi Model," a mechanism

enhancing cooperation between pregnant women and MCH service providers through formation of support groups consisting of local community members. This initiative has resulted in increasing numbers of women receiving antenatal care at public institutions and having institutional deliveries.

**(2) Technical support for nationwide scaling up**

"Safe Motherhood Promotion Project Phase II" provided technical support to reflect some of the knowledge and experience gained from the "Narsingdi Model" in HPNSDP, so that they could be applied across the country.

HPNSDP gave top priority to lowering the maternal and neonatal mortality rates to promote the activities of Phase II and financed the activities required for nationwide applications (purchasing equipment, developing and improving facilities, providing training, etc.) with central emphasis on MCH service improvement and health system enhancement.

**(3) Supporting the provision of a safe childbirth environment for pregnant women**

This project aims to improve public medical facilities that serve the purpose of HPNSDP, provide equipment contributing to MCH and improve educational and living facilities for colleges of nursing to raise the quantity and quality of healthcare human resources.

In addition, it works to provide training to community support groups and set up new community clinics to offer MCH services.

This project has resulted in growing numbers of community support groups receiving training and the rates of receiving antenatal care and deliveries with SBAs rising.

In this way, Jica supported community-wide efforts in Bangladesh to protect the health of women and children and provide a safe maternity environment for pregnant women and those giving birth, with the aim of improving the health of women pregnant, giving birth and after birth, and newborn babies in Bangladesh.

Photo) Training for a group of residents

