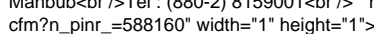




## **Project Signing: World Bank provides \$300 million to improve child nutrition and income of 600,000 poorest mothers in Bangladesh**

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The Government of Bangladesh today signed a \$300 million financing agreement with the International Development Association (IDA) for the Income Support Program for the Poorest Project. IDA is the World Banks concessional arm that helps the worlds poorest countries. The Project will provide cash transfers to the poorest mothers to reduce their poverty with the objective of improving their childrens nutrition and cognitive development. About 600,000 poor mothers and pregnant women will receive monthly payments through biometric-enabled Bangladesh Post Office cash cards for participating in activities aimed at the growth and development of their children. "Ensuring adequate nutrition prenatally and in the first two years of life helps to maximize a childs intelligence and brain development and enables higher level of learning through childhood and into adulthood," said Johannes Zutt, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh. "The project will help poor mothers to learn how to improve the nutrition of their young children and also provide an income supplement to enable them better to act on that learning." Despite Bangladeshs record of reducing child mortality, the country is among the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of malnutrition. 41% of children below the age of 5 are stunted, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The project will cover 42 of the poorest Upazilas in northern Bangladesh that lag behind in nutrition indicators and is expected to benefit 2.7 million poor people. Pregnant women and mothers of children below 5 years from extremely poor households will receive payments for regular visits for antenatal care services, child nutrition and development awareness sessions and monitoring of the childs weight and height. "Well Design Safety nets can improve child health and nutrition outcomes, while contributing to reduction of poverty and inequality. The project is a good example of involving local government bodies as well as using technological innovation to improve service delivery in Bangladesh," said Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Senior Secretary, Economic Relations Division, government of Bangladesh. "The Project will break the cycle that binds poor children to poor nutrition and cognitive deficiencies". The project will also focus on strengthening local governments delivery of safety net programs by setting up administrative platforms at Union Parishads to identify and enroll beneficiaries and ensure timely payments. The agreement was signed by Mohammad Mejbahuddin and Johannes Zutt, on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh and the World Bank respectively at the Economic Relations Division. The credit from IDA has a 38 year term, including a 6 year grace period, and a service charge of 0.75 percent. Media Contacts  
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