



# News Release



Office of Public Affairs

U.S. Embassy

## American-funded Play Focuses on Mothers Needlessly Dying in Childbirth

*Lahore, March 8, 2007* - - The USAID-supported Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Newborns (PAIMAN) project marked International Women's Day by staging the dress rehearsal of a play 'Bahut Dair Kar Di' (Too late) that dramatically underscores the importance of health care for expectant mothers.

Written by the renowned writer Dr. Waseem Khan, 'Bahut Dair Kar Di' is set in a typical Pakistani village where a conservative patriarch refuses to address his pregnant daughter-in-law's threatening health condition. The family's neglect results in the young woman's death, a tragedy that occurs all too often in real life in Pakistan.

"Mother and child health care is a shared responsibility and the U.S. Government will continue to be partners with the people of Pakistan in this important effort," said Bryan Hunt, U.S. Consulate Principal Office, who attended the dress rehearsal at the Qadafi Stadium along with Director General, Health Services, Dr. Mohammad Aslam Chaudhary, and over a hundred Lady Health Workers.

The Principal Officer appreciated the important role of Lady Health Workers in bringing relevant health information to families and providing preventive care to all the people of their communities, in particular, to mothers, babies and children.

Speaking on the occasion the Director General, Health Services Punjab, Dr Mohammad Aslam Chaudhary, said that the Government of Punjab is committed to provide health care at the doorsteps of the people.

"The provincial government has advertised the training of Community Midwives in Punjab and these courses will soon start at the midwifery schools. After 18 months of training these Community Midwives will serve at the grass roots level in Punjab," he said.

Pakistan's maternal and newborn mortality rates are some of the highest in the subcontinent. Between 350 and 550 women die in Pakistan for every 100,000 live births mostly due to insufficient or poor healthcare care and delays in receiving emergency help to deal with complications during childbirth.

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PAIMAN is part of USAID's \$127 million investment in health in Pakistan through 2006. The five-year PAIMAN project is working to reduce the deaths of mothers and babies across Pakistan by raising awareness and increasing informed decision making.

PAIMAN is also providing communications training to 6,000 Lady Health Workers in Punjab. The play will complement training by Lady Health Workers and support groups in imparting a basic understanding of pre-natal care, child delivery and newborn health that mothers need to protect themselves and their babies.

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