



News Release



Office of Public Affairs

U.S. Embassy

***Putlee Tamasha* Puppets Teach Mother and Newborn Health**

Islamabad, October 11, 2006: For the first time ever, traditional *Putlee Tamasha* puppet shows will bring a message of mother and child healthcare, along with time-honored stories, to some of Pakistan’s most remote rural communities. As part of USAID’s five-year Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Newborns (PAIMAN) program, this new health outreach initiative will help spread information about maternal health and newborn care to rural areas in Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan that cannot be reached by television or radio.

“The challenge has long been how to reach the large percentage of rural Pakistanis who do not have access to electronic media,” program officer Fayyaz Ahmed Khan explained. “We were longing for indigenous ways of reaching out, mediums that resonated with rural communities.”

Putlee Tamasha is an ancient, traditional, and low-cost medium of entertainment popular in rural areas and enjoyed by both men and women. It is easy to stage and requires little preparation. The traditional wandering puppetry families, once a cultural characteristic of Punjab, Sindh, and parts of Baluchistan, have waned with the advent of television but remain popular in some rural areas.

On October 10th, USAID’s implementing partners launched a month-long pilot program, performing for audiences in the poorest areas of Punjab while the program managers track the results and successes. Currently, PAIMAN program officers are working with one husband and wife team; although fluent in Punjabi and Tharaki, these puppeteers, like many of their audiences, are illiterate. Over the past few weeks they have worked to memorize the new material and build the message into traditional story lines. If successful, the program will be expanded—in the initial phase—to include four more teams over an expanded area.

USAID’s five-year PAIMAN program seeks to reduce mother, newborn, and child deaths in Pakistan, in 10 districts countrywide. In particular, this initiative focuses on building the **skills** of public and private health care providers and local hospitals to manage pregnancy and **newborn** emergencies. Emergency transportation links will be developed in each community. Along with providing new equipment and renovations to 31 health facilities and strengthening management of district health systems, PAIMAN aims to improve knowledge and practices of individuals, households, and communities regarding mother and newborn health.

The United States, through USAID, is providing more than \$1.5 billion in development assistance to Pakistan over the next five years to improve education, health, governance and economic growth. In addition, the United States has pledged a total of \$510 million in earthquake relief and reconstruction efforts to assist the people of Pakistan and to support Pakistani government relief and reconstruction efforts.

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