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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 18, 2009

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PRESS RELEASE

USAID BEGINS SUPPORT GROUPS TO HELP PEOPLE WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Dushanbe, March 17, 2009. Representatives of the Dushanbe City Health Administration and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded ZdravPlus project presided over the opening of a new set of support groups in City Health Center #1 for patients with arterial hypertension, more commonly known as high blood pressure. These support groups seek to help patients improve their health in the long term by changing their lifestyles. To do this, patients themselves must take responsibility for their own health. They must cooperate closely with doctors, and change their own lives to be healthier. The City Health Administration, the Association of Cardiologists, the Family Medicine Association, and USAID's ZdravPlus project worked together to create these support groups.

The support groups for high blood pressure are the second such groups established with USAID's support. Similar support groups have been helping diabetes patients since November 2008. Both of these chronic diseases' outcomes depend on how accurately patients follow their prescriptions. Support groups are one method of informing and educating patients about this important responsibility. This communication helps to develop better doctor-patient dialogue and communication between patients themselves. When patients share their experiences and learn from each other how to overcome challenges, it makes them feel that they are not alone and helps them make better informed decisions.

Supporting individual patient responsibility key to improving primary health care. The strengthening of primary health care and the introduction of family medicine are priorities supported by the Ministry of Health's Concept of Health Reform, the Government of Tajikistan's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and the Population Protection Law of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The USAID ZdravPlus project is one of the many assistance projects implemented in Tajikistan by USAID on behalf of the American people. Since 1993 the American people through USAID have provided about \$300 million in assistance programs that support economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and education systems of Tajikistan.

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