



# BANGLADESH



## PHASE III

### Country Situation at Baseline

- **Profile of typical fistula survivor:** In Bangladesh, early marriage and pregnancy are common — women’s average ages at marriage and first childbirth are 15 and 18.7 years respectively. Eighty-seven percent of deliveries take place in the home and are attended by traditional birth attendants and relatives. A 2003 situation analysis found that many women who suffer from fistula are under 20 years old (with some fistula survivors as young as 13), illiterate, poor, and unaware that fistula is treatable. It is common for survivors to have been abandoned by their husbands and forced out of their homes.
- **Caseloads:** The situation analysis found that in the year 2002, six medical college hospitals had recorded a total of 241 fistula survivors seeking treatment. Among them, 192 women were admitted, and 123 were treated. Most of the repair surgeries were performed at the Dhaka and Chittagong Medical College Hospitals. It was estimated that in Bangladesh there are 1.69 cases of fistula per 1,000 women who have ever been married.
- **Barriers:** The medical college hospitals surveyed were equipped for treating fistula, but supplies were often inadequate. In the facilities visited, there were only one or two specialists skilled in fistula surgery.
- **Cultural context:** Many women in Bangladesh have limited decision-making power, and must obtain the permission of husbands and mothers-in-law before seeking health care. In addition, women’s access to emergency obstetric care is hindered by acute poverty, illiteracy, the generally low status of women, and the resulting lack of emphasis on women’s health.

SELECTED INDICATORS	
Total population (millions)	149.7
Total fertility rate (2000-2005)	3.46
MMR (per 100,000 live births)	380
% births with skilled birth attendant	12
births among women 15-19 (per 1,000 live births)	117
IMR (per 1,000 live births)	64

*Source: UNFPA State of World Population, 2004*

Source: *Situation Analysis of Obstetric Fistula in Bangladesh*, EngenderHealth and UNFPA, 2003

### Facilities Available to Treat Fistula

Below are the numbers of fistula case admissions to Medical College Hospitals recorded for the year 2002:

1. Dhaka Medical College Hospital
  - 53 fistula cases admitted
2. Chittagong Medical College Hospital
  - 33 fistula cases admitted
3. Rajshahi Medical College Hospital
  - 16 fistula cases admitted
4. Sylhet Medical College Hospital
  - 44 fistula cases admitted
5. Khulna Medical College Hospital
  - 21 fistula cases admitted
6. Barisal Medical College Hospital
  - 25 fistula cases admitted



## **Campaign Achievements**

### ***Research***

- “Situation Analysis of Obstetric Fistula in Bangladesh,” a needs assessment report, was completed in September 2003. To map the current state of obstetric fistula treatment needs and capacity, the analysis drew on assessments of six medical college and district hospitals, and interviews with fistula survivors, their relatives, traditional birth attendants, and health professionals.

### ***Advocacy***

- The BBC, as well as a national television station, have broadcast segments on obstetric fistula, seeking to raise awareness and highlight the issue.
- National newspapers in English and Bangla have published stories on fistula.

### ***Prevention***

- Offered in 24 districts, the Skilled Birth Attendants (SBA) training programme has trained a total of 631 SBAs. The six-month obstetric care training focuses on use of a partograph, maintenance of a protocol for management of obstructed labour, and early referral of complicated cases for Emergency Obstetric Care. The programme’s ultimate goal is to place a trained SBA in every community.
- The government of Bangladesh, the World Health Organization, and UNFPA have collaborated to institute a pilot project offering maternal health vouchers for pregnant women at various Upazilla Health Complexes.

### ***Treatment***

- A National Fistula Centre has been established at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. To date, national and international fistula surgeons have operated on 140 women with complicated fistula cases.
- The fistula surgery theatre and post-operative ward of the National Fistula Centre has been renovated, allowing surgeries to be performed three days a week.
- A fistula treatment curriculum has been instituted at Dhaka Medical College to train future trainers and practitioners. In 2004, 24 doctors and 10 nurses were trained using this curriculum.
- An additional 13 doctors and 10 nurses have been trained by Australian fistula experts Professor Judith Goh, Dr. Hannah Krush, and Ms. Kath.

## **Partnerships**

1. Ministry of Health
2. Ministry of Family Welfare
3. EngenderHealth
4. Islamic Development Bank