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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. AMBASSADOR ADDRESSES JOURNALISTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AT RIGHT TO INFORMATION WORKSHOP IN DHAKA

DHAKA, MAY 29 -- U.S. Ambassador Dan Mozena and Minister of Information and Cultural Affairs Abul Kalam Azad MP, met with journalists and civil society representatives today at a workshop focused on Right to Information (RTI) issues. Organized by USAID's governance program PROGATI (Promoting Governance, Accountability, Transparency, and Integrity), the workshop provided a forum for journalists and civil society organization (CSO) representatives to share their experiences with Government of Bangladesh officials on public information.

In his remarks, Ambassador Mozena expressed support for improved implementation of and compliance with the 2009 RTI law, which he said marked a significant development in anti-corruption efforts. He also stressed the importance of Bangladesh's oversight institutions – including the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Information Commission, and Anti-Corruption Commission – in fostering a more transparent, accountable, and democratic government and society.

Since 2009 USAID's PROGATI has implemented public awareness and outreach initiatives regarding the law; conducted training programs for more than 900 journalists, civil society representatives, and government officials on the use of the law; and promoted compliance with the law among government agencies. PROGATI, through its local partner Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI), shared resource materials that included guidelines for CSOs on submitting RTI inquiries, case studies from investigative journalists who submitted RTI requests, and a handbook on CSO compliance with RTI disclosure requirements.

Since 1971, the United States Government has provided over \$5.8 billion in development assistance to Bangladesh. In 2011, the United States provided more than \$180 million to improve the lives of people in Bangladesh to promote democratic institutions and practices; expand economic opportunity; improve health and education services; increase food security and support Bangladeshi efforts to mitigate the impact of natural disasters.

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