For Immediate Release

Bangladeshi Cholera Experts Fly to Haiti

DHAKA—13 November, 2010—A team of experts in clinical management and epidemic control from ICDDR,B (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh) set off for Haiti today to assist the international community in managing the island's cholera epidemic.

The eight-person team, some of whom recently returned from working in flood-ravaged Pakistan, consists of clinicians, microbiologists, a medical officer and – for the first time on one of ICDDR,B's emergency teams – two Bangladeshi nursing officers. The team will join two additional expert clinicians who travelled ahead of the main party, and arrived in Haiti earlier this week.

According to Haiti's Health Ministry, since the cholera epidemic broke out in late October, more than 11,000 people have been treated for symptoms of the disease, and at least 800 have died. The number of patients increased dramatically when Hurricane Tomas battered the island on 4 November, causing flooding throughout the country, and further contaminating fresh water sources. According to the Health Ministry, the epidemic has just reached the capital, Port-au-Prince, threatening another 2.5 to 3 million people.

"Our team specializes in the management of cholera outbreaks and epidemiology,' said team leader, Dr R.N. Mazumder. "Our priority is to train local people so that Haiti's health authorities are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to manage this, and any future, outbreaks. We will also provide training on clinical case management and assist with establishing treatment centres in the most affected areas."

The ICDDR,B team will provide technical assistance through three organizations: Project Hope, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) – the Regional Office for the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Americas.

This is the first time in more than a century that cholera has struck this Caribbean country. Poor sanitary conditions after the January earthquake has left the country vulnerable to the disease, which causes diarrhoea and vomiting, leading to severe dehydration. Cholera can kill quickly but can be easily treated through antibiotics and the use of Oral Rehydration Solution, which ICDDR,B (then known as the Cholera Laboratory) helped pioneer in the 1970's, in the wake of the Liberation War.

Contact:

Nasmeen Ahmed,

Senior Communications Manager

Communications Unit

ICDDR,B

Tel: + 880 28860523-32, Extn. 3106

Mobile: + 880 0173 002 4706

Email: nasmeen@icddrb.org

Notes to editors:

1. ICDDR,B

ICDDR,B (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh) is a leading health research institution located in Dhaka. In collaboration with academic and research institutions throughout the world ICDDR,B conducts research and training to develop and share knowledge which address some of the most critical health concerns facing the world today. It translates this knowledge in its Dhaka Hospital, which treats more than 130,000 patients a year. In the past decade the hospital has treated more than a million patients with diarrhoeal disease, 300,000 of whom would have died without treatment.

ICDDR,B discovered and developed Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS), a simple mixture of salt and sugar, the cornerstone of treatment for diarrhoeal dehydration world-wide.

2. Project Hope ICCDR,B team

Dr R.N. Mazumder, Clinician and Team Leader,

Dr Sirajul Islam and Dr Zahid Hayat Mahmud, Microbiologists

Dr KATM Ehsanul Huq, Clinical Researcher

Dr Sharifuzzaman, Sr. Clinical Fellow

Dr Chandra Shakhar Das, Medical Officer

Ms. Momtaz Begum and Ms Cathrine Costa, Nursing Officers

Project HOPE (Health Opportunities for People Everywhere) was founded in 1958 and is dedicated to providing lasting solutions to health problems with the mission of helping people to help themselves. Project HOPE provides medical training and health education, as well as conducts humanitarian assistance programs in more than 35 countries.

3. **Dr. Azharul Islam Khan, Clinician**, will work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Atlanta, USA

4. **Dr Pradip Bardhan, Clinician** will work with the Panamerican Health Organization (PAHO), which is the Regional Office for World Health Organization (WHO) in the Americas.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is an international public health agency established more than 100 years ago. PAHO is experienced in working to improve health and living standards of the countries of the Americas. It serves as the specialized organization for health of the Inter-American System. It also serves as the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization and enjoys international recognition as part of the United Nations system.

5. Cholera

Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacterium Vibrio cholerae. It can kill within 24 hours if left untreated. Every year, there are an estimated 3–5 million cholera cases worldwide and 100 000–120 000 cholera-related deaths. The short incubation period of two hours to five days enhances the potentially explosive pattern of outbreaks.

Dr. Shah M. Faruque, Head of Molecular Genetics at ICDDR,B (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh) and his research team recently discovered how a harmless bacteria can become the cause of many cases of cholera. Article can be found online at:

http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nature09469.html