

SE Asia Meeting  
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PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

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Remarks of the First Lady  
Meeting on Southeast Asia  
Washington, D.C.

[Acknowledgements - highlight youth in audience and their importance to the future - talk about young people we met on this journey]

...But before I start, I want to start with some of the conclusions that I reached and have passed on, both formally to the president and various people in the State Dept, AID, NSC and elsewhere, as well as informally. I went to South Asia with the specific purpose and perhaps the primary goal of highlighting the importance of investments in people, especially in women and girls. There's been an extraordinary amount of attention paid to competitiveness, to the creation of global markets, to trying to - through trade agreements and the like to expand prosperity throughout the entire world. I believe that is critically important - I also believe though, that for a global marketplace to work effectively and to be sustainable over the coming years, there must be a global community to support that global marketplace and that part of making any community function well is investing in the potential of people and in recognizing that women probably, more than any other source of investment, really do provide an opportunity for jump starting development throughout the world. I was intent upon trying to do that, I thought it was very important to do that; I also thought it was very important to make the case that basic rights of women and girls are critical to the human rights agenda internationally and also critical to development.

Many of you know something about this region I visited, but I must say I have been quite struck by how little America knows about this region. Many more people are familiar with the Far East and the Middle East than they are with South Asia. Time and time again as I met with people, I was struck by how the five countries I visited, except for some visual images and some tourist attraction pictures that were in everyone's minds, were pretty much of a mystery to most of our fellow citizens. And I think its important that we recognize the progress that has been made in each of those five countries, particularly the progress towards democracy, and most notably because that progress has been often at such a great price and many women have played major roles in advancing democracy and keeping those countries together. Its important to look at the progress that has been made in many social indicators; it is particularly important to stress the accomplishment that has flowed from the investments in family planning and population control.

And I think that if one looks, you can see many positive developments in South Asia despite the overwhelming impression of

absolute poverty and the very difficult political, social and cultural challenges that those countries are coping with. I also think that's a part of the world where, because there is a strong commitment to democracy, because there is now an openness to markets and development that it is absolutely ripe for us, stressing, as strongly as we can, the importance of investing in people, and the critical importance of removing obstacles to the full participation of women and girls in those societies.

That is a particular concern of mine, as it is of many of yours and it is still not an issue that is readily accepted as being on the forefront of issues facing our world. I tried to make that point at the Social Summit last March in Copenhagen; I made it over and over again through South Asia, I'm going to continue to make it here in the US, in as many forums as I can and I know it's one that you care about as well. I underscored this issue in a speech that I gave at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in which I said, "I recognize that discussion of such problems as education and health care for girls and women is viewed by some as soft. Labeled dismissively as women's issues, belonging at best on the edge of serious debate about all the problems we confront on the edge of the twenty-first century".

I want to argue strongly, however, that the questions surrounding social development, especially of women, as discussed at the Social Summit in Copenhagen, are at the center of our political and economic challenges. Governments, businesses and citizens must recognize and act upon that truth for the betterment of the nations of our global family. I think that is a very important point for us to make, not only abroad, but at home. That one cannot expect this country or any country to continue to develop and to have citizens fully capable of participating in democracy, with all of the demands that it makes upon us, if one does not recognize the significance of investing in women and girls.

The empowerment of women is something that I think you will see in the pictures and other stories about the trip that I made. It is critical to the development of these countries and of our own. I think that we in the US can be quite proud, actually, of both our governmental and our NGO support for such development around the world, and particularly in this region. We saw many examples of where direct US assistance had an impact upon the lives and prospects of many people, and particularly saw how it could be leveraged to enable local groups and even local governmental entities to become more committed to investing in their own people.

We now channel much of our aid in this region through NGOs and I think, as we'll talk in a minute, those NGOs have really demonstrated their extraordinary capacity to create conditions for empowerment among women that have swum against the tide of

any kind of increasing opposition to women's roles, any upsurge of extremism and it is critical at this point in the history of our own country, as well as in the history of these other countries, that our aid for health, education, family planning and other sorts of investments not be turned back, but that we continue to try to provide that assistance and create this partnership.

As you know, our bilateral and multilateral aid programs are now threatened with deep cuts and even elimination. As is the case, for example, with our contribution to the World Bank. These programs absorb less than 1% of the federal budget. Now every poll that I've seen, of American citizens, seems to suggest that American citizens think that foreign aid takes 10 to 15 percent of our budget, but instead it is 1% and actually slightly less. It is very important that those who recognize the relationship between our efforts here at home and those abroad, that we make that point as often and as strongly as we can. That we are talking about a very small amount of money that has had very big payoffs for the health and education and well being of people, particularly women and children in this region and throughout the world.

In every country that I visited, I saw great support amongst leadership in both the public and private sectors for changes in the lives of women and girls. That was certainly the tone that was set in all of the private meetings and the public occasions that I participated in; and some leaders were very outspoken in their public support for the kinds of changes in their own culture that will enable women and girls to be more empowered. But it is also very clear, that, just as in our own country, there are very deep divisions and tensions about the proper role of government, the proper role of NGOs, the proper role of women, the proper role of all kinds of interventions that are seen as disrupting existing cultural or religious traditions. One of the great challenges for those of us who do believe in advancing the causes of human beings through basic education, health care, and other kinds of services that will enable people to live their own lives as fully as possible, is this conflict that is being posed between human rights and certain cultural traditions and I think of all of us have to be very willing to think that through very carefully, and particularly as we move toward the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, be willing to speak out on behalf of basic common goals that should not be a question of debate when it comes to providing the tools of opportunity that all people, including women, deserve to have.

So with those introductory remarks, let me go to the slides. This is going to be - I have the clicker. I need the lights - so exciting.

### FAISAL MOSQUE

We started our trip, as some of you may remember, in Pakistan. And I'm showing this first slide of our trip, my daughter's and mine, to the Faisal mosque in Islamabad for a very obvious reason. Pakistan is an Islam country; India has about a quarter of its population that are Muslim; Bangladesh is a Muslim country and I think the effort that the President and others of us in the Administration have tried to make to point out often that Islam is not the problem. Fundamentalism is not the problem. Religious extremism is the problem. And as we move our way forward in attempting to promote a positive agenda of change for women and girls, I think it's important to us to be respectful and understanding of other traditions than our own, while nevertheless continuing to promote basic beliefs in the importance of human rights - and those human rights include women's rights. And there is strong support for that among the leadership in these countries who are themselves Muslims, and they need our strong support to give them that opportunity to continue to speak out.

### ISLAMABAD COLLEGE

We visited a college for girls that really was a school that educated girls from the ages of five to about twenty-one in Islamabad. It was a school in which the girls were coming largely from well-educated, affluent families, but I have rarely been with a group of young women who impressed me more than these young women did. We had a discussion and a visit with these girls, particularly the older ones, that touched on a remarkable range of concerns.

This young woman sitting there next to me - and she was part of a circle of young women of her age - is older than the rest of the students, but I think representative of them. She has already been married and divorced by her husband and she has come back to school to learn to be a writer so she can write about the lives of the young women in Pakistan. The other young women who were around that circle with her were able to articulate the conflicts they feel in their own lives between the traditional religious and cultural pulls that they face coming from their backgrounds, and their own aspirations. I don't think you can underestimate the impact that Prime Minister Bhutto has had on young women like this because they see her as someone who, nurtured by her family, encouraged by her father, not only permitted but pushed to get the best possible education, has been able to achieve in ways they never thought possible in their own lives before. That level of aspiration was very exciting to those of us who sat in that room and, also, we could hear them talk in ways that I wish more young American women were able to talk, about the real conflicts in roles that are part of many women's lives.

## VILLAGE OUTSIDE LAHORE

We went from there to a village outside Lahore, to a health clinic which is, under government sponsorship, trying to become more effective in delivering health services, particularly to women and children, and are offering family planning services in the health clinic. Those of you who know about the work of stabilizing population growth around the world know that there are several Muslim countries that have made great strides in this area, such as Indonesia, where I visited a family planning clinic last year, in Pakistan, which under the new government is attempting to replicate some of those successes -- it is not easy, their birth rate is still the highest in that region, they will double their population in 25 years if they don't do something dramatic -- but they are beginning to try to move on that. This health clinic is in a village that is very proud of the fact that it has a school for girls. This is one of the real challenges facing countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, that they do not have enough physical facilities and teachers to educate the girls now that they have become willing to promote education for girls.

My daughter and I visited this school, we went into classroom where the girls were doing algebra - that was the room next door, then we went into a science class and each girl had a microscope. We went around and talked to each about the work she was doing. There's no electricity in this building, no telephones, there was very little in the way of modern communications, information revolution, but there's an extraordinary commitment to the idea that girls should be educated.

We went outside that classroom and visited some of the women in that village. And this is a picture of a women with a spinning wheel. It was almost as though we had walked onto the set of a Biblical epic. But despite the fact that this was a village that I'm sure by standards of villages in Pakistan was more advanced than any other, it was a village in which women were constantly doing the work that you see being done there. And yet in a conversation with about ten mothers who were sitting in a circle talking to me, this one woman said that she had had ten children, five boys and five girls, and she wished she had known about family planning before because that was too many children to try to educate. She sent her daughters to the school we had just seen, but then there was no other school to send them to because there was no high school to send them to when they finished primary school. So despite a great big poster outside this school which said education is for girls and had pictures of girls doing things, their aspirations have exceeded their capacity to be able to produce educational opportunities for the girls. But there is a recognition, and I found it deeply rooted

in a lot of the conversations, in the evidence from research and the other sources that I had, that there is a changing attitude among many people, particularly among the large group of rural citizens in Pakistan about the importance of educating their girls. And that's one of the reasons that the USAID initiative that I announced in Copenhagen to promote education for girls is so important.

I went from there to this setting, which is the Lahore University of Management Sciences, which is a joint USAID and Pakistan private sector effort. In this setting there are a number of women, this is an entire class of women who have come back for graduate education in management and training -- again I wish all of you could have been there with me, because in talking with these women, many of whom are older than average, who are college students and even graduate students, there is an extraordinary amount of energy -- these women want opportunities to take decision-making responsibilities in their societies. They want to be part of the entrepreneurial and business life of their country. They also have all of the kinds of questions that women in our own country have. They want to know whether its possible to make more money than their husband and still have a marriage, whether its possible to balance family and work in this part of a life; they grilled me quite hard about why so many marriages in American break up, and does that have to do with women leaving the home and going out into the workplace. There was quite a lot of very important personal questions about how they were going to meld their ambitions for their own lives with their traditions, as well as fit into the larger society which is obviously not changing as broadly as they hope it will when they are ready to assume more responsibility.

And I also want to say a special word about Prime Minister Bhutto. I know that there are those who have criticized some of the steps that she's taken and I know that there is room, as there always is in these situations, for legitimate criticism. But I think it's always constructive to put yourself in the position of the person who is charged with this kind of responsibility. She had a luncheon for me to which she invited about sixty women, some of whom are quite critical of her, in which we talked about human rights in Pakistan; we talked about some of the large development struggles that they are engaged in and I think that her efforts to weave through the many complex challenges that she faces are overwhelming in their intensity. I was very pleased that her visit to our country did go well, and we're trying to support her as much as we possible can.

It's a bit humbling, to say the least, in talking to all of the women who I will show you in these slides, who have assumed position of political leadership, often after their own extraordinary travails, including imprisonment, torture, exile and almost inevitably, the assassination of husbands, fathers,

brothers, sons and even mothers and sisters. So for those of us in this country who become impatient with our own failings and with one another, it is useful to reflect on the price that other people around the world are paying to try to keep democracy thriving.

### INDIA - SEWA

We went from Pakistan to India and I know that some of you in this room know Ela Bhatt, who is the founder of SEWA, the Self Employed Women's Organization, and I hope that those of you who do not, will have an opportunity to meet her and to learn more about her work. I think it is important, again, to think through in a more analytical way, perhaps, all the roots of a lot of what we all believe could be possible on behalf of human rights and human potential, and particularly women, and to know that those roots are very deep and that they can be sources of both strength and inspiration.

In terms of Ela Bhatt's own life, she was a devotee of Gandhi's. Gandhi, for those of you who have been able to follow him, was quite outspoken about the rights of women. Some of what he said we would not agree with now, or in retrospect, but in general, his emphasis on women being full participants really gave this woman the grounding and the analytical basis to go out and form this union of women who were vegetable vendors and rag pickers, totally victimized and oppressed in the most dehumanizing ways, and give them the strength to believe in themselves, which was so evident in our gathering together. There were hundreds and hundreds of women under this tent, dressed in colorful saris, primarily pinks and reds and greens and blues, some had walked 12 to 15 hours to be there. Each carried with her this newfound sense of individual power that came through the solidarity they had achieved through SEWA. And of course the sense they gave to the rest of us is that through this effort they are able to think about themselves as actors in their own life.

One woman stood up and said I used to be afraid of my husband, I used to be afraid of my Mother-in-law, I used to be afraid of the police, now I am not afraid any more. And that is as eloquent of what it takes to become a person able to act on her own as I could hear, as someone who had overcome the fear that she had lived with. And again, it put into stark perspective some of our own concerns that are not as significant.

This is their bank. They have a bank, a forced savings program that provides social security, home mortgages, the women have established it, they run it. It is one of the best examples of effective micro-credit lending in the entire world. I hope we

can do more of it here. It is one of the hopes I have arising out of this trip, there are so many chances for us to organize women around their own capacity as borrowers, lenders and savers, and therefore acquire the tools of economic freedom.

The visit to Mother Teresa's orphanage was important for several reasons, it highlighted for some of those who were with us the imbalance that is growing in the numbers of boys and girls in some of these countries. Girls are abandoned much more often than boys -- the numbers of girls in this home prior to being adopted were in excess of ten to one over the numbers of boys. The preference for sons over daughters results in the practice of prenatal sex selection in many parts of this region and in areas where girls even survive to birth and the difficult period thereafter, there is a large number of girls who die before their fifth birthday in these countries, particularly Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal and to a lesser extent, India because they are the last to eat, the last to be given medical care, the most neglected. And so often they don't live until their fifth birthday. I think concern about girls and women has to take a very broad view about the status of girls and how they are treated from the very beginning.

#### GANDHI FOUNDATION

The kind of efforts that are underway to bring some support to an agenda of change in India are widespread and I was particularly impressed with the work that Sonia Gandhi and the Rajiv Gandhi foundation are doing. She is the widow of Rajiv Gandhi who was the son of Indira Gandhi, both of whom were assassinated, and she has remained committed to trying to reach out and provide opportunities for the empowerment of poor people and particularly for women throughout the country.

Some of you may have heard some reports about a poem that I was privileged to read at the speech I gave at the Rajiv Gandhi foundation and this is the young woman who wrote it. The principle of her school came to see me at a luncheon that Mrs. Wisner, whose husband is the Ambassador to India for us, gave and she said we had hoped to have you come visit our school, but we couldn't, so we gave you this poem; and the more that I think about the issues that are important to us and try to think of ways to give life to those issues, the more convinced I am that its part of finding our voice as people who are believe in human rights and women's rights and finding a voice that resonates with as many people as possible. This poem, I don't know if you can see that - entitled "Silence" - really captured what it is I think many women, not just women in India, or women in that region of the world, but women around the world confront as they attempt to find a voice that really does articulate the complex

feelings that they have about our own personal situations and also the larger society. The kind of voice that I hope will lead to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and then from it with some kind of call to action that will be stripped of political rhetoric, stripped of the kind of arguments that are beyond where most women in the world currently find themselves in terms of their own situation, and instead rooted in what could be done, and how it could be done, if women were given the voice to overcome their fears, as the women at SEWA said, to stand up for themselves, for their families and for their communities.

#### NEPAL

We went on to Nepal. Nepal is one of the three countries in the world where women have a shorter lifespan than men. Largely because it has a horrifically high maternal mortality rate and death rate for girls under the age of five. This is an example of what I mean when I say that we need to give voice to the most elemental needs, in ways that people can really relate to, if we're going to try to create some kind of new agenda that will lead to opportunities for women and girls.

#### HEALTH CLINIC

We visited a small health clinic started by American women who came together and raised money some years ago and were able then to get funds from Save the Children and USAID and other organizations - it is now run by Nepalese, but still very strongly supported by the American community.

A group of women entrepreneurs put together a Safe Home Delivery Kit, which they hope will begin to cut the mortality rate during birth for the women in Nepal. It puts into stark perspective the differences in the challenges that women around the world face. This delivery kit has five things in it. It has a large piece of plastic that is a sterile grounding for the pregnant woman to lie on. It has a piece of twine to tie off the cord, it has a bar of soap for the midwife or the family member to wash hands, it has a small plastic disk to place the cord on and a clean razor blade. Those five things, they know, will save lives.

It is the kinds of metaphor that those of us in this country have to keep in mind as we talk about what we can do to help advance a women's agenda internationally, because there are so many different levels of challenge that women are confronting. I thought that the safe birthing kit is something that is a possibility of something to follow up on in other regions of the world where maternal mortality is also a difficult challenge.

#### CRAFT'S COOPERATIVE

We also, in Nepal, had a chance to visit a number of women who are part of Craft's Cooperative, a producers association. And these women, just a few years ago, would not have been

outside of their own homes, most of them would not have been unveiled. The kind of energy that this woman in the center displayed was exhilarating. She told me that she, like the hundreds and hundreds who have been drawn into these crafts associations, had always been inside her home, had never been able to do anything on her own, had been married at a very young age, but had always loved to paint, and someone had seen what she had done and convinced her to go out and do it and sell it, and she in turn, because it was income producing, could convince her family, starting with her mother in law, that that was something that was good for the whole family.

#### TEA WITH LEADING WOMEN

In every country that I've been privileged to visit, ever since I started travelling in this position, I've always had a breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, something, with leading women from the community; and here our US ambassador, Sandra Vogelgesang, put together a remarkable group of women who spent two hours telling me about their own lives. These are women who are able to tell, very clearly, their own struggles about overcoming opposition of grandparents and grandmothers and fathers, and others, to be able to be educated. But there was very little sugar-coating of the extraordinary problems that a country like Nepal faces because of its deep poverty. But in each of these settings, what I found most encouraging is that the women in the settings found common ground amongst themselves. And they were able to begin to talk, really, as though I wasn't there about how they were going to be able to stay in touch with each other, to work with each other, and it was another example of the need, perhaps, for all of us to take a deep breath, to be supporting each other, to be working with each other, because certainly these women are doctors and lawyers and educators and elected members of parliament and human rights activists, and they all have their own individual view of the world, but too often those become tunnel views and they don't really share points of view back and forth, across the table. And so for me, listening to them talk about additional steps they were going to take together, whether it was this setting, or Pakistan, or the other countries I was in, was very exciting, but also brought home a lesson to me that I think those of us who get very busy in our own country, marching down our own track, might as well take a deep breath and consider.

#### BANGLADESH - PRIME MINISTER ZIA

Bangladesh was one of the countries that I was most interested in visiting because I was most familiar with their development work. This is Prime Minister Zia, again, a woman who is in power because of a feudal dynasty. Her husband was assassinated, she had never been active in politics before and now finds herself digging in and working very hard to try to

master the challenges that she's confronting. You can see in the faces of these women, whether its Prime Minister Bhutto or Prime Minister Zia, just this extraordinary resolve to keep focused on democracy and the other goals that they shared with their husband, father, whoever they were closely related to.

#### YUNUS - GRAMEEN

Let me briefly describe for you what this gentleman, Mohammed Yunus, has done in the last 15 years. Dr. Yunus is a PHd economist trained in the US, from Bangladesh, and upon finishing his work, he returned to Bangladesh, about 15 years ago, with the idea that he wanted to extend credit to both men and women who were poor, thinking that there was a way to unleash their energies. The Grameen bank then began as really an outgrowth of his vision of what could be accomplished. Through that he learned that women were much better credit risks than men and he began to move away from his original goal, which at the time was considered quite outlandish - lending 50-50 to men and women, to lending to women primarily, so that now 98% of his borrowers are women.

We visited a Hindu village of untouchables outside of Jessore, Bangladesh, and it was remarkable on many levels, but one reason is that we were able to visit one of the Grameen Villages, and when this village, for logistical reasons, was chosen, the nearby Muslim village sent its women to visit as well. So there had never been a visit like this to a Hindu untouchables village, there had never been a gathering like this of about 150 Hindu and 150 Muslim women, all of whom were talking about how the ability to earn income had changed the lives of themselves and their families. There was also in Bangladesh the only real encounter we had with opposition to our visit and particularly the kind of sites that I was interested in visiting. There was some outcry against my influencing, or trying to influence, the life of Bangladesh and my highlighting NGOs like Grameen. And we talked about this with these women, and the women were very forthright about what they had to say. But the stories they told were again quite remarkable. One woman told in great detail how when she decided she wanted to borrow money from Grameen she was told by the Muslim leader in her village, that if she and her family became members of the Grameen borrowing group, that no member of her family would receive a religious burial. And she said, "I talked with my husband about this, because it was very serious. But we decided that it was good for our family," and she ended by saying, "So we went ahead and we borrowed the money and now what we must do is get a different Mullah [Priest]". And it was such a remarkable step that could have only been made because there was money coming into the family. There was a tangible benefit from taking this very risky step into the unknown, because the propaganda against Grameen tells these women that they are going to be kidnapped, put on

islands, forced to become Christians - there are a whole range of threats put forward to try to prevent them from doing what you see them doing, which is organizing themselves.

The five women on this side, they are in a borrowing group. The way it works is that they are formed into a group and each woman waits her turn to borrow the money she needs. And she cannot borrow until the woman before her has repaid the loan. So there is support for each woman's enterprise and a kind of solidarity about what they are trying to achieve, which really is the root of what makes the Grameen model work.

They have here what are called the sixteen decisions, but what I love about the sixteen decisions, which are the principles, the commitments, that women who join Grameen are asked to make, is that they go from the most basic -- "We shall build and use pit latrines" -- to the kind of commitments about -- "We shall not inflict any injustice on anyone, neither will we allow anyone to do so, we shall always keep our children and the environment clear" -- , and a strong statement against dowry, which is an amazing commitment on the part of these women because it would appear that by standing against dowry -- neither to pay it nor to receive it-- they are swimming against the cultural tide in a very strong current, but they do so because they can see the tangible benefits to their own lives.

There is such a direct relationship between the kind of feminism you see at SEWA and at Grameen and the kind of results that flow to the families because of that. That linkage really makes the whole system work. The kind of work that the women are doing is very broad. They are doing traditional crafts, certainly, they are buying milk cows for their families. One woman told me proudly that with her first loan she bought a milk cow, with her second loan she bought a second milk cow and with her third loan she bought a rickshaw for her husband to do something to help the family. I mean, that's what Dr. Yunus said, when you give the opportunity to borrow to a woman she invests in her family. She often will go and buy her children back, because many of these women have sold their children to be indentured servants, they didn't really make the decision, the decision was usually made by their husband and mother-in-law. But they go and buy their children back, they send their children to school, they begin to do things that give opportunities to the entire family. In contrast, according to the Grameen experience, men are more likely not to invest in the family, to not be able to use the money effectively to build wealth, because they do not have that same sense of connection to how that money can make a difference in that family unit.

#### MAKING STEEL BEAMS

This is one of the non-traditional work pieces that are done by the Grameen women. They are making steel and concrete beams that they then, the women who make them, sell to other women who are using them to build their houses with loans that they have taken out from the Grameen bank. So there is a whole market, a whole self-sustaining market that is being created and there are many other kinds of work that the women do that they then sell one to the other. My daughter and I were wearing some of the clothes that they make out of the material that they produce. And the kind of organization that it takes to move from the work that women always do to being producers and sellers of that work is really enhanced by their relationship with Grameen. We also visited some other programs near Jessore, that I thought were very interesting and again, perhaps instructive, if not directly then maybe by implication.

#### GOVERNMENT SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

This is a government school for girls. One of the goals that the Prime Minister that you saw earlier has set is to try to convince more families to send their children to school and particularly to increase the number of girls. These girls are in school under one of two programs. Either their families get a food allotment every week, so that the families do not have to put them out to work to make money for the food, or their families get a direct payment to keep their girls in school. This Food-for-Education program, which the Prime Minister conceived of, we saw in action. We happened to be there the day that the families showed up for their food allotments, and they were extremely poor. They were poorer than any of the people I had seen in any of the villages, so for them, their big sack of food made a very big difference in their lives. And this community was very proud of their being able to send their girls to school because again they could see direct results. It wasn't being told that if you send her to school she'll be a better educated person and that will make the family better. There was something very direct that they could benefit from if they made that decision, which was a difficult decision for many of them.

We also visited a family health clinic which was run in another village which was an NGO sponsored clinic, but funded with USAID and other sources of funds. And the women who were coming to the clinic were both coming for family planning help and advice, were coming for pregnancy checkups, coming for well child check ups, and in talking with a number of women who were there, they had been able, finally, to start spacing their children because of this clinic, which came to them and which we cut our support for, as many of you know so well, during the 1980s, and are now trying to pick back up our support, to support this kind of grass roots outreach, to women where they live. And

that's another program that we will have to be very vigilant in trying to protect. A lot of the information that the women get has to do with nutrition, weaning of children, very basic kinds of help that enable them to keep these babies alive, and by keeping them alive and healthy they are better able to space their children, have smaller families, invest more in those babies. We also still are fighting the battle of formula introduction in countries, including our own, which has undermined the health and well-being, particularly in developing countries, of babies, because you don't have the hygiene to safely prepare most formulas and deliver them, and so there's a big push on to try to encourage women to breast feed which is something that is a real cultural tension because they look at the West and they think that it must be better because we still have more bottle feeding than breast feeding.

#### DIARRHEAL CENTER

The kind of work that the USAID and our government have done directly benefits us as well as the countries in which we do it. This is a picture from the International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research. This center has been in the forefront of creating the oral rehydration salts that Jim Grant, the late head of UNICEF, used to carry around with him. It has been at the forefront of combatting cholera and malaria and it has saved countless lives. It can also be directly benefitting us here at home if we only learn the lessons of lower-tech medicine that can be equally effective. This gentleman standing there with me is a Doctor from Louisiana who is there, I think, for six months. We have babies who die of diarrhea in this country and we spend about a half a million dollars on intravenous feeding. And there is no evidence that intravenous feeding is any more effective than feeding on a regular basis, at home, or in the hospital, the mixture of salt and sugar and clean water that has saved the lives of babies in this hospital. The difference of course is that it's labor-intensive and our medical system is moving more and more toward eliminating nurses and other personnel in favor of more and more machinery. And it's a real problem when you see what the impact is both in terms of lives and costs. But that center is something we should be very proud of.

#### SRI LANKA

This is the last stop, it's in Sri Lanka. We have a woman Ambassador, Ambassador Schaeffer. We have another woman President, and this woman is both a widow and an orphan, as they call her in Sri Lanka - her father and her husband were assassinated. She is trying very hard to negotiate peace with the Tamal separatists in northern Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka has a

higher standard of living, higher health indices, higher literacy rates than the other countries I visited. Its growth rate is about 7% a year, it has an enormously positive future, but it is being sapped by the constant battle with the Separatists in the North, and she has very courageously determined that she is going to try to bring about some kind of negotiated peace.

We also visited a wonderful project that is run by a Catholic nun named Sister Bernice, who has an all service project - it's education, it's a production unit for women who are trying to become income producing, again, largely funded by USAID, a very direct example of making a difference in the lives of lots of people.

Just when I thought the trip was over and there was nothing more to be seen, no more elephants to ride, I went on, my last stop, and had a parade. And I show you that, because it was always that kind of experience - going from conversations with people who were intent upon changing many of the conditions in which people found themselves, and then being very much reminded of the culture and traditions in the various countries and the kind of constant tension that was working its way out as they attempted to be democratic in promoting the kinds of opportunities, particularly for women, that I had seen and had talked about, throughout the trip.

That is a very fast overview, I just want to end with two things - this is the Safe Home Delivery Kit. This can save hundreds, thousands of lives and when I was thinking about it, I thought, this really is a metaphor because there are ways in which each of us can help save lives. Maybe not literally, but certainly figuratively here at home. That are maybe in our own mind as simple as this and therefore often overlooked. So I'm really going to keep this on my desk.

This is a Grameen banner. Now I think women's groups in American need banners! We need lots and lots of banners. We need a little fun, we need a little color, we need a little excitement, we need a little humor, and this is the insignia for Grameen, which is the house, and sort of, you know, an arrow pointing up, onward and upward you know, make a better life together, and a sense of solidarity that this banner represents, I really brought home with me, in a way, because I liked to be reminded of the work we have to do here at home, on a number of issues that many of you here are engaged in. But also to remind myself of the joy and the enthusiasm that I saw among these women, who were beginning to make decisions in their own lives, and to try to capture some of that in our own efforts here at home. Because I am convinced that in the battles we have ahead of us, on behalf of people and programs and concerns that we share, we have a great opportunity as well as a great challenge,

if we enter into it with the kind of positive feeling and attitude that I saw so clearly in places very far from here.