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**HELEN KELLER INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH HOMESTEAD FOOD
PRODUCTION PROGRAM SELECTED AS CASE STUDY FOR “MILLIONS FED”
INITIATIVE**

June 22, 2009, New York, NY – Out of 250 applicants, Helen Keller International’s (HKI) Homestead Food Production (HFP) program in Bangladesh has been selected to be one of twenty-seven case studies for “Millions Fed: Proven Successes in Agricultural Development.” The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) initiated this research project with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. IFPRI will present evidence from case studies of current policies, programs, and investments that demonstrate success in reducing poverty and hunger.

Learning from successes in agricultural development has become more urgent recently due to the volatility of global food prices and increasing food insecurity. The “Millions Fed” project offers a unique opportunity to showcase success stories that will reach a broad audience, including policymakers, development practitioners, donors, scholars, NGOs, entrepreneurs, students, and citizens concerned about the future of global agriculture. The programs selected as case studies have had clear and measurable impacts on individual or household food security and/or income and have been demonstrated to be financially sustainable or cost-effective.

HKI’s HFP program helps communities establish sustainable food production systems designed to meet the particular needs of the targeted area. HKI and its local NGO partners provide technical assistance, training and supplies, including seeds, seedlings, saplings, poultry and vaccines to establish village model farms. Organizers of the model farms receive training on nursery development, poultry farming and management skills. The newly trained model farmers in turn help others in their community establish year-round food production at the household level. Participating families are trained in homestead agriculture, the marketing of agricultural products, and culturally-appropriate nutrition education. As a result, families have access throughout the year to vegetables and fruits providing vitamins and minerals that are essential for proper immune system function and full physical, intellectual, and cognitive development. In addition, surplus produce provides a small but vital source of income to families that can help them move out of poverty and gain economic independence. The majority of HFP enterprises are managed by women, who are empowered by the contributions they make to the economic stability of the family and to decision-making within their households.

HKI initiated HFP in Bangladesh in the 1990s and the program has since become a paradigm of success, expanding to Cambodia, Nepal and the Philippines. Studies in Bangladesh have shown that children in households with developed gardens consume 1.6 times more vegetables and have



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a lower risk of night blindness than children in homes without HFP. At a cost of \$9 to establish a homestead garden, this program is a proven sustainable solution that improves nutrition and helps reduce poverty. Victoria Quinn, Senior Vice President, Programs noted that, “Supporting a poor woman to grow more nutritious food while at the same time teaching her how to provide herself and her young children the best possible nutrition is key to reducing levels of malnutrition and eradicating poverty in a meaningful and sustainable way.”

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Founded in 1915, Helen Keller International's (HKI) mission is to save the sight and lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. HKI combats the causes and consequences of blindness and malnutrition by establishing programs based on evidence and research in vision, health and nutrition. HKI programs combat refractive error, cataract, trachoma, onchocerciasis (river blindness) and malnutrition. HKI receives support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and other national and local governments as well as from private and corporate foundations and individuals.