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TURKMENISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Sisterly Advice Helps Conquer Disease

A community activist helps refer a relative for tuberculosis treatment



Enesh (on the left) with her sister in law.
Photo: Project HOPE

A USAID and Project HOPE training program on tuberculosis awareness helped a community activist refer her sister in law for correct diagnosis and support her throughout the treatment course.

A phone call woke Enesh at 3 o'clock in the morning. Her brother was calling to say that his wife, Lachin, was very sick – she was coughing up blood. The family was particularly concerned given that Lachin was pregnant, and also still nursing her last-born baby.

Enesh had recently taken part in a training seminar for community leaders on tuberculosis communication for the population, organized by the USAID and Project HOPE's Central Asian Tuberculosis Control project. Enesh understood that Lachin's symptoms might be a sign of tuberculosis. Though Enesh had worked with the community to raise tuberculosis awareness after her USAID-supported training, she had never thought this might happen to one of her own family members. Enesh recommended that her sister-in-law have a screening for tuberculosis, including a sputum test, right away.

Lachin took advice to her heart, and went to see doctor the following day. As Enesh had suspected, Lachin was diagnosed with tuberculosis. The young woman was immediately admitted to hospital and started treatment

based on the WHO-recommended strategy called DOTS, promoted by the USAID and Project HOPE. After a 3-month treatment in hospital, Lachin was discharged to complete her treatment on the out-patient basis. For the next several months, she will be receiving medication at the local health house three times a week, with the direct supervision of her doctor, but upon completion of the course, the young woman will be fully cured from tuberculosis.

Having been recently trained on the critical role of support and motivation so that tuberculosis patients would complete the full course of treatment, Enesh has been visiting her sister-in-law regularly, reminding her about the importance of taking all of her anti-tuberculosis drugs without interruption.

While Enesh was upset by her sister-in-law's diagnosis, she was proud that she had recognized the symptoms and suggested that Lachin visit the doctor in time. Enesh was also able to comfort her brother and other family members, explaining that tuberculosis was curable and that prompt initiation of treatment was essential.

Enesh is one of the many community leaders trained by the USAID and Project HOPE program to help detect tuberculosis cases in their communities, facilitate prompt referral of patients to medical personnel, and thus contribute to improved treatment outcomes for this disease.