



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

KAZAKHSTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Attention to Quality Improves Care

Maternity hospitals in the country's capital are offering better maternal and child care.



*More and more women give birth with assistance from their family members.
Photo: Abt Associates.*

The introduction of continuous quality improvement methods in health care facilities gives medical staff the tools to uncover and analyze problems and then find solutions that lead to better diagnosis and care of patients

"I always dreamed of giving birth with my husband present, and here I was allowed to," says Olessya Mikhreva who recently gave birth at the Astana City Maternity Hospital #1. "The medical personnel helped us through it all."

Partner births were recently introduced at this and other maternity hospitals and wards in the Kazakhstani capital city with support from the USAID Health Reform project. The project has worked to improve the quality of care for mothers and newborns in Astana since 2005. Like in other facilities, at Maternity hospital #1, USAID helped establish indicators and client survey tools to measure the quality of care as well as assisted in setting up a monitoring team to work with the Head physician to assess care. Initial surveys in the city's hospitals revealed a number of improvement areas: new mothers lacked information on family planning options, the hospitals did not adequately ensure the warm chain to prevent hypothermia in newborns, and only 10% of women were giving birth partners.

To address the revealed issues, USAID helped organize a working group and trained over 50 gynecologists, midwives, and nurses from maternity wards and primary care facilities in continuous quality improvement methods. Medical staff also underwent training for maintaining warmth in newborns. To increase women's awareness of contraception they could use after delivery, information stands were erected in each facility. To further encourage participation of partners during birth, Maternity Hospital #1 remodeled their rooms so that they offer more privacy and friendlier environment to their patients and their family members. "The greatest challenge was to change attitudes within the hospital work environment," says Anara Kusainova, Obstetrician-gynecologist at the Maternity Hospital #1. "Employees were scared to reveal problems or to participate in discussions for fear of being fired."

But now the medical staff are enjoying the positive changes in their hospital. "Now clinic staff understands that the quality of service depends on every member on the floor and that only through cooperative efforts can problems be solved," says Kusainova. Expectant mothers also appreciate the improvement. The number of women who bring family members to support them through the birth has doubled city-wide to 18-20%.