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TAJIKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Hospital Makes Strides in Health Care

Evidence-based methods improve maternal and child health care services



"My mother supported me during my delivery, I was allowed to move freely during labor and delivery, and I held my baby right after birth," says a happy patient of Dushanbe Maternity House #3. Photo: Abt Associates

USAID's programs are strengthening the quality of health care available to mothers and newborns in Tajikistan by improving knowledge and changing the attitude of physicians and families alike.

Today, Maternity House #3 in Tajikistan's capital city Dushanbe is making strides in the care for pregnant women and infants thanks to USAID's efforts to introduce international, evidence-based methods of medical care.

Tajikistan has faced many tough challenges in its health care sector over two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the problems was high rates of maternal and neonatal illness and mortality caused by the lack of quality medical services and the use of unnecessary, and sometimes harmful, screening procedures.

To improve health outcomes for Tajikistan's mothers and newborns, in 2006, USAID's ZdravPlus project began introducing the World Health Organization's Safe Motherhood Strategy for newborn care and family planning. To facilitate the transition, USAID, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, taught doctors and nurses in pilot maternity hospitals and reproductive health centers around the country in evidence-based, family-centered practices in obstetric care.

Dushanbe Maternity House #3 with its 78 staff and 4,000 deliveries annually was among the health care facilities piloting the strategy with USAID support. In addition to training its staff in effective perinatal care, USAID helped the Maternity House open family-centered birth preparation classes. At these classes, doctors and nurses teach family members how to support women during the pregnancy and promote participation of a partner during labor and delivery – a practice that was unheard of during Soviet times.

As a result of USAID support, the percentage of women experiencing normal deliveries at Maternity House #3 has risen by 50%. Twenty-five percent more mothers are benefiting from their partner's support during delivery, and 89% of deliveries are performed without the use of medications. "During the birth of my first child, none of my relatives were allowed to stay with me in the delivery room, says one of the patients of Maternity House #3. She still remembers how she was not allowed to hold her child for some time after her delivery. "The experience now with my second child is totally different," says the woman. "My mother supported and encouraged me during my delivery, I was allowed to move freely during labor and delivery, and I held my baby right after birth."