

Program Successes in Uzbekistan

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New Financing and Management Systems Bring More Efficient Care Closer to Home

ZdravPlus in Uzbekistan has helped shift health care resources and decision-making to lower levels of the health system, so that primary health care facilities can better respond to community health needs. In pilot areas, resources for primary health care facilities have increased 8% over 3 years. A new per capita financing system ensures that everyone in rural communities has equal access to the same amount of health care resources every year, with more resources available to mothers and children — people who use primary health care most often. Per person financing levels have quadrupled over the past 3 years.

At the same time, management skills of primary health care personnel have been upgraded. The introduction of community health needs appraisals and business plans has ensured that primary health care facilities better understand the health needs of the population and use their resources to meet those needs. Providing more health resources to rural areas, improving management skills, and granting more flexibility in local decision-making already have resulted in increased utilization of primary health care facilities and decreased referrals. These financing and management changes, combined with similar efforts to improve quality of care, bring better care for Uzbek families closer to home.

“Mini-Residency” Program Turns New Knowledge into Skills

ZdravPlus funds a “mini-residency” program at the Tashkent International Medical Clinic (TIMC) to support the Government of Uzbekistan’s health sector reform strategy. The course was designed to allow Uzbek family physicians from Ferghana Oblast to experience first-hand family medicine following international standards. Each ten-day “mini-residency” allows three doctors working in primary health care facilities to receive hands-on family practice experience. The program provides an intensive clinic walk-through and covers topics such as family medicine, patient-centered care, doctor-patient interaction, personal health and hygiene, urgent care, laboratory diagnostics, instrument sterilization, pharmaceutical management, and clinic management and administration. Clinical rounds are also conducted. Advanced skills workshops are provided to participants on casting, suturing, and other topics. Modern and appropriate reference materials are given to each participant to complement topics covered.

The availability of TIMC provides a unique opportunity to allow Uzbek doctors to gain first-hand experience of how family medicine is practiced in line with international standards in their own country. Doctors that have completed the program said they had learned a lot through hands-on instruction and practice with modern medical equipment. Much of the equipment they became familiar with at TIMC is similar to equipment they have recently received in their own facilities thanks to a World Bank credit. One participant commented that he was no longer afraid to consult a reference book during a patient consultation when he had a question or difficult diagnosis. He also enjoyed learning more about the importance of properly educating patients by better communicating with them about their diagnosis and treatment. Several participants enjoyed learning how the clinic was so efficiently managed.



The USAID-funded ZdravPlus Program provides technical assistance and training to improve the health of Central Asian populations by improving health delivery systems

Nutrition and Anemia Campaign Raises Awareness

Everyone's talking about anemia prevention in Ferghana Oblast where 78% of women and children suffer from anemia, according to a recent survey. People now have up-to-date information about anemia prevention because of a ZdravPlus campaign that has reached more than one million people through television and radio and at least 20,000 people through health fairs and plays. Anemia (low iron content in the blood) causes slow physical development in children and complications in pregnancy. Anemia most often results from a lack of iron in the diet, so families need information on how to eat better to maximize iron in their diets.

Although the results of the post-campaign survey are not yet available, early indications are that it had quite a substantial impact. State health officials acclaimed the mass media and soap opera approach as something "totally new" in Uzbekistan. One doctor was amazed that a medium used for "selling toothpaste and chewing gum" could also be used to "sell health" – and called for more health topics to be treated this way. A Peace Corps volunteer found two women in her village talking about a campaign brochure on anemia and discussing how this information differed from what they had known before. When people have the information they need, they can take action to improve their health.

Community Groups Come Together to Solve their Health Problems

ZdravPlus in Uzbekistan was also unique in the region for involving NGOs and other community and third sector actors in health promotion, health education, and advocacy. Small grants provided to three-way partnerships between communities, NGOs, and rural primary health care facilities have succeeded in the joint identification of health needs and the development of innovative strategies to address these needs. ZdravPlus provided small grants totaling \$73,000 to 18 different NGOs to complete 28 community health projects.

To date, these projects have educated 13,370 people on various health topics and provided access to clean drinking water to 25,000 people in seven communities. The community grants program resulted in significant improvement in the health knowledge of target populations and began to develop civil society and third sector actors centered on improving community health in Ferghana Oblast. Grant projects were successful in educating children in hygiene, providing information on family planning to adolescent girls and boys, training and supporting young mothers on topics such as breastfeeding, diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, and anemia, providing modern medical literature in Russian and Uzbek to primary health care professionals, diagnosing goiter in several communities, and starting support groups for managing diabetes.

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