



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TURKMENISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

IMCI in Turkmenistan

IMCI is making a difference in Turkmenistan's youngest generation



Photo: ZdravPlus

Family Physicians in Lebap Velayat Learn New IMCI Practices

Despite the often-challenging environment in Turkmenistan, positive changes are taking place in health care to benefit Turkmenistan's children, thanks to the Ministry of Health and multilateral support for WHO's Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) strategy.

The USAID ZdravPlus and Healthy Family Projects have been working with the Ministry of Health (MOH) since 2002 to implement the WHO's Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) strategy on several levels, including trainings for doctors and nurses, introduction of IMCI into the medical education system, and informing parents through community outreach activities.

Aysoltan Halitova, a family physician, recently took part in the 12-day IMCI training in Mary Velayat, supported by ZdravPlus. The course included a hands-on clinical component with patients and interactive lectures led by national and regional trainers from Turkmenistan's Maternal and Child Health Institute, which has been implementing IMCI trainings around the country for the MOH since the program began. However, using IMCI in their everyday practice has meant significant changes in the way physicians manage child illness in Turkmenistan, and Aysoltan was understandably sceptical. But she decided to give the new methods a try when her *own* son got a cold, cough, rapid breathing and a temperature – evidence of pneumonia. She gave her son the appropriate antibiotic in syrup instead of an injection – in accordance with the IMCI recommendations – and continued to give him food and liquid as usual. Aysoltan was pleased to see that her son started recovering the following day and that the infection quickly cleared up with no need for prolonged treatment. She is now using IMCI-recommended treatments for all of her young patients, and is just one of nearly 800 physicians who have been trained in IMCI since 2002.

In cooperation with the MOH and local authorities, ZdravPlus has also implemented campaigns since 2002 that educate the population on IMCI key messages such as diarrhea, nutrition, breastfeeding, and acute respiratory infections. These "Keeping Children Healthy" campaigns have been so successful in large part because they utilize informational materials that have been developed specifically for the Turkmen environment. Relying heavily on nurses who educate parents during visits to the health facility and in families' homes, the campaigns are often now conducted independently by local health authorities who have adopted this USAID ZdravPlus Project model.