



SUCCESS STORY

Training Boosts Healthcare Quality

Some 600 laboratory technicians were trained in new techniques



Laboratory workers practice their new skills during a hands-on workshop.

Providing basic training and simple-to-use techniques to lab technicians is an important step in strengthening healthcare, especially in rural areas where access to quality medical care is limited.

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A country's healthcare workforce needs access to updated knowledge and continual training in order to deliver high-quality, modern health services to its people. Recognizing the importance of this kind of training, USAID sponsored a capacity-building project among Turkmenistan's laboratory analysts and workers. The program was started in 2002. Within four years, it had trained a total of 600 laboratory workers, including lab physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, and lab assistants, at varying levels of the health system. The program reached workers in the five provinces of Turkmenistan and in the capital city of Ashgabat.

The training focused on improving quality assurance, safety, infection prevention, and equipment use. In many cases, the program also arranged for basic laboratory equipment such as microscopes, solutions, and reagents to be donated to the laboratories where the trainings took place. Each participant received a copy of a Laboratory Training Manual.

The program proved to be very popular with both trainees and the Ministry of Health. Prior to the training, technicians had received few opportunities to upgrade their skills — one participant said his last training course was 23 years ago. Another said this was the first lab training she had received since moving from her previous position, where she specialized in gynecology, to her current position as a lab technician.

The lab training course teaches participants about testing procedures and processes based upon international standards. In contrast to the complex protocols for lab testing and diagnostics which prevail in the country, these procedures are simple — but difficult to follow without proper equipment, reagents, and other supplies.

The training occurs in a laboratory, offering opportunities to practice skills in a practical, hands-on setting. Traditionally, training for lab technicians in Turkmenistan is based on theory and offers no hands-on practice. The program recorded an average 43 percent increase in knowledge by the end of the training, resulting in a significant boost to the lab technicians' skill set and practical knowledge.