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**KYRGYZSTAN**

# CASE STUDY

## Young Imam Improves Health Education

**A determined imam delivers health message to mosques and schools**

### Challenge

Imam Abdinazar is a 30-year-old father of two from Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan. A densely populated region of 900,000, Jalal-Abad struggles with widespread poverty and malnutrition, and child and maternal mortality rates are high. After Imam Abdinazar attended a USAID-supported health seminar in 2004, he decided to take action. He was determined to share what he learned with the region's predominantly Muslim population.



Photo: USAID/Mahabbat Aymkulova

Imam Abdinazar, at his office in Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan, has given a boost to health education by leveraging the city's impressive network of mosques and schools.

### Initiative

Imam Abdinazar reached out to Jalal-Abad's network of 440 mosques, which are packed every Friday for prayers, and six schools, to launch his campaign. Focusing first on the Bazar-Korgon district, Imam Abdinazar organized

educational seminars at mosques for imams and their followers. At these meetings, most of which were designed for male heads of families, participants learned about family planning, preventing sexually transmitted diseases, and how to recognize medical emergencies and safely bring someone to the hospital. Participants received brochures to take home and place in mosque libraries for others to learn from.

***“By explaining how to recognize dangerous symptoms in a sick child and how to care for a pregnant woman, I am wishing wellness for others as I would have them wish for me and my family,” says Imam Abdinazar.***

### Results

Imam Abdinazar's bold initiative has brought visibility to health education at both mosques and schools. Six Muslim schools have incorporated his materials into two-hour health classes for their students, and mosques continue to hold health seminars for adults. The program has been a great success — his teachings have reached nearly 2,000 people with basic health messages — but Imam Abdinazar has even greater plans: he hopes to train volunteers to regularly visit mosques and schools in his region to continue educating Muslim communities in Jalal-Abad about vital health issues. By delivering health education to schools and mosques, Imam Abdinazar is helping future generations grow up safer and healthier.

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