



SUCCESS STORY

Unifying Health Care for Families

New centers bring array of health care services together in one location



Photo: ZdravPlus

A nurse at the Dushanbe City Health Care Center #1, which offers a wide array of family health services, takes a child's measurements.

Together with partner medical facilities, the Ministry of Health, and Tajikistan's medical education institutions, USAID is establishing a focused primary health care system.

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Today, Tajikistan is making strides both to reallocate scarce financial resources from specialized secondary and tertiary level care to primary health care, and to train family doctors and nurses to be capable of addressing a wide range of primary health care needs.

Whereas the Soviet system could see a mother visiting one specialist for prenatal care, another for her child's earache or flu, and yet another for an elderly relative's hypertension, the primary health care model can accommodate all of her family members in one institution, often using the skills of a single family doctor.

Since 2002, a USAID health project has been working with partner medical facilities, the Ministry of Health, and Tajikistan's medical education institutions to establish family medicine centers in Tajikistan and to prepare a cadre of specialists to take on the expanded range of responsibilities as family doctors. With USAID support, the first family medicine center opened in 2002. After merging separate polyclinics for children and adults, the Dushanbe City Health Care Center #1 embarked on a steady process of building the capacity of its family medicine staff to accommodate a wide array of patients and conditions.

To describe the type of care available at the center, Dr. Natalia Sattorova cites a relationship she developed with a patient struggling with her weight, diabetes and hypertension. "As a family doctor, not only am I able to prescribe the right kinds of medicines my patient needs to manage her hypertension and diabetes, I am also able to work with her to make the lifestyle changes necessary to bringing her weight and her diabetes under control," she said.

According to the health care center's staff and administration, the 70,000 individuals assigned to this medical facility in Dushanbe are becoming more comfortable with family medicine as an institution. At the same time, family practitioners are also becoming more confident in their ability to provide a complete package of services to their clients, thus initiating fewer referrals to specialists for cases that they now know they are able to manage themselves.