



SUCCESS STORY

New Methods Keep Children Healthier

Trained health care staff educate parents as part of coordinated effort



A health care worker in Turkmenistan teaches a mother to use evidence-based treatments of childhood illnesses.

USAID has been training physicians, nurses and the community in the WHO-recommended Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses approach.

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Penir's 3-month-old infant is suffering from diarrhea. To help her baby, she is using the evidence-based methods she learned during a Keeping Children Healthy campaign: continuing to breast-feed, giving oral rehydration solution, and keeping an eye out for any warning signs that would require professional medical assistance. For her first three children, Penir would have reduced the breast-feeding to her child and given antibiotics, as was previously recommended in such cases.

Photo: ZdravPlus

A USAID health project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and local authorities, introduced the Keeping Children Healthy campaigns in 2002. The project and its local partners developed the highly popular and successful campaigns and their informational materials specifically for the Turkmen environment. Now largely implemented by local health authorities, the campaigns educate the population on the treatment of diarrhea, nutrition and breast-feeding, and acute respiratory infections, based on the World Health Organization's Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) strategy.

The campaigns also complement USAID-supported IMCI trainings for physicians and nurses. Leaflets, posters, and other mass-media outlets during the Keeping Children Healthy campaign are giving the same advice that the population is receiving from the newly re-trained health care workers.

According to Penir, her family nurse convinced her to use the new method, and asked other family members to listen as well, insisting that the child's health was everyone's responsibility. With support from USAID's projects, 100 nurses have been trained in IMCI methods to date. These nurses are working together with IMCI-trained physicians to provide better care to their young patients and are reaching out to their communities to spread the key IMCI-related health messages. The project is planning to train up to another 400 nurses in IMCI.