



SUCCESS STORY

A New Outlook to Labor and Delivery

Methods lead to more patient and family-oriented medical care



Photo: ZdravPlus/Nazgul Abazbekova

A mother helped her daughter through labor and delivery in Issyk-Kul Province, Kyrgyzstan, a positive trend fostered by a USAID health care project there.

A USAID project helps health care providers in Kyrgyzstan change their outlook on pregnancy and labor from a medical condition to a natural process.

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Nowadays in Kyrgyzstan's Issyk-Kul Province, women are experiencing a new, more family-focused approach to labor and delivery. Giving birth with a partner present, in a room without other patients, and with the freedom to move around during labor and to choose the most comfortable delivery position has made labor and delivery both safer and more pleasant. After delivery, breast-feeding and skin-to-skin contact are emphasized, babies room with their mothers, and visitors are encouraged.

These positive changes were introduced with support from a USAID health care project, which trained hospital-level health care providers from the province's Cholpon-Ata, Balykchy, and Karakol maternity hospitals in World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended safe motherhood practices. The training encouraged health care workers to look at pregnancy and labor not as medical conditions but as natural processes in which women and families should be supported in making decisions that are right for them. Participants learned about postpartum and newborn care, as well as acquired a variety of tools that help the provider monitor labor and delivery. In addition, the participants spent one week in the maternity hospital with the WHO expert trainers, getting hands-on experience.

Many of the trainees admit that they were skeptical that such methods would be beneficial. However, after putting these new practices into use with women giving birth in the Karakol maternity hospital, these gynecologists, neonatologists, nurses, and midwives came to embrace the new practices as their own.

Patients also have been pleased with the new approach. As one new grandmother in Cholpon-Ata noted, "Years ago, I gave birth on a table without a partner and it was scary. But now we are very happy. My daughter just gave birth and I was able to be with her through the whole process. She could eat and drink, and gave birth in the position that she wanted. And the doctor, a young woman, was very nice and helpful."

Follow-up visits at the Issyk-Kul maternity hospitals revealed continued enthusiasm and commitment to the new methods.