



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TAJIKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

USAID Helps Reduce Child Mortality in Tajikistan

Trainings for Rural Communities Help Community Nurses, Caretakers, and Families Reduce Malnutrition



Rural health worker Fayzova Mamlakatne (left) poses with one of her patients and his mother in rural Tajikistan.

Photo: Quality Health Care Project

“The reason we had such high malnutrition in the past was that many parents don’t know how to nourish their children. Almost all of them have small farms where they can grow crops and raise poultry, so they have the minimum food to feed children, but they didn’t know what to do. Before the training, children weren’t getting enough food: they wouldn’t be fed frequently enough, and they didn’t have enough diversity in their diet. We teach mothers about the amount of food that children need, and about the importance of variety in their diet.”

Olga Kurbonova Akobirova
IMCI Director, Vakhdat Region

Rural and mountainous Tajikistan has the highest under-five child mortality rate in Central Asia¹ and many of these deaths are caused, directly or indirectly, by chronic malnutrition. The Director for the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) program in the Vakhdat region, Dr. Olga Akobirova, says that parents often don’t know how to feed their children. “For example,” she explains, “we had a mother who brought in her six month old and he weighed just under ten pounds. It was her first child and she was only breastfeeding him three times a day.” Facing this type of chronic undernourishment so early in life can have a lifelong impact on children, affecting their cognitive and physical development, reducing individual earning potential, and costing countries 3–6 percent of their annual GDP.²

To ensure that all children in Tajikistan have the opportunity to grow up to be healthy, successful adults, the USAID Quality Health Care Project and the government of Tajikistan are working together to train community nurses in the World Health Organization’s IMCI program. These trainings improve the practical skills of community health care providers, who in turn raise awareness of child health issues among child caretakers.

Providers are mentored in how to counsel parents on proper child growth, development, disease prevention, and nutrition. Luckily for the little boy in Dr. Akobirova’s story, his health care provider had attended USAID-funded training. She says, “They advised the mother that she needed to breastfeed her baby as often as he wanted, and to introduce adequate nutritious complementary foods. The baby is fine and growing well now.” The Vakhdat region where Dr. Akobirova works is seeing such positive results everywhere that USAID-funded training has taken place. From September 2011 to September 2012, the number of malnourished children seen has decreased by 53%, building hope for a productive, healthy future generation in Tajikistan.

¹ WHO World Health Statistics Report 2012, p. 19.

² USAID’s Global Health Strategic Framework