



P R E S S R E L E A S E

Activities to Improve Maternal and Child Health Launched in Five Marzes

December 20, 2006

On Wednesday, December 20th Project NOVA conducted an official launch meeting to acknowledge the beginning of its activities designed to improve maternal and child health for people living in rural areas in five new Armenian target marzes: Aragatsotn, Ararat, Armavir, Syunik, and Vayotz Dzor.

More than 900,000 women of reproductive age and almost 180,000 children under five reside in Armenia with approximately 35% living in rural areas. Access to affordable quality maternal and child health services in rural areas is a priority for the Armenian healthcare system. While most of Armenia's major health indicators such as infant and maternal mortality improved significantly over the past 14 years, they are still higher than those of Western European and other developed countries. Most infant deaths occur during early neonatal period, especially among low birth weight and premature infants, and can be associated with the condition of the mother, delivery practices as well as poor antenatal and postpartum care. Data from independent surveys and the Government health statistics indicate positive trends; however further efforts are necessary. The Government of Armenia is committed to improve the health status of women and children by prioritizing this issue in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Program and by adopting in 2003 Maternal and Child Healthcare Strategy for 2003-2015.

Since October 2004, Project NOVA has already worked in Shirak, Lori, Tavush, Gegharkunik, and Kotayk marzes. It established 12 clinical training sites and trained over 500 rural physicians and nurses in safe motherhood, antenatal and newborn care, infection prevention, key reproductive health competencies and sexually transmitted infections management; In addition, the project renovated 60 health posts, provided 12 seed grants for rural community development, and donated basic equipment and supplies to 178 health posts. Over 1,000 health talks were given by community activists and health post nurses on maternal and child health issues reaching out to over 12,000 rural women and men with important health messages.

Over the next three years, Project NOVA will continue to improve the quality of and access to maternal and child healthcare services in over 150 in-patient and out-patient rural and semi-urban facilities from Marz Hospitals or Maternities, Women's Consultation Centers, Ambulatories, Health Centers to Health Posts in five new target marzes. The four key components of the project are to:

1. Improve performance of select networks in the area of maternal and child health.
2. Strengthen management and supervision.
3. Contribute to the improvement of maternal and child health policy formulation and implementation and data-driven decision-making.
4. Increase consumer demand for maternal and child health services through community education and mobilization; and the renovation and equipping of health posts.

Project NOVA, is a USAID-funded five-year initiative, implemented in Armenia by Emerging Markets Group, IntraHealth International and Save the Children in partnership with the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health and in close collaboration with Marz Health Departments, Center of Perinatology, Obstetrics and Gynecology; Basic State Medical College, Gyumri State Medical College and other RH/FP/MCH related public, private and non-governmental structures.

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