



TECHNICAL BRIEF EXPANDING LABORATORY SERVICES AT ALZAHRAA PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTER IN DIYALA, IRAQ



Photo: USAID / PHCPI

The laboratory at Alzahraa PHCC, with new equipment from USAID/PHCPI.

BACKGROUND

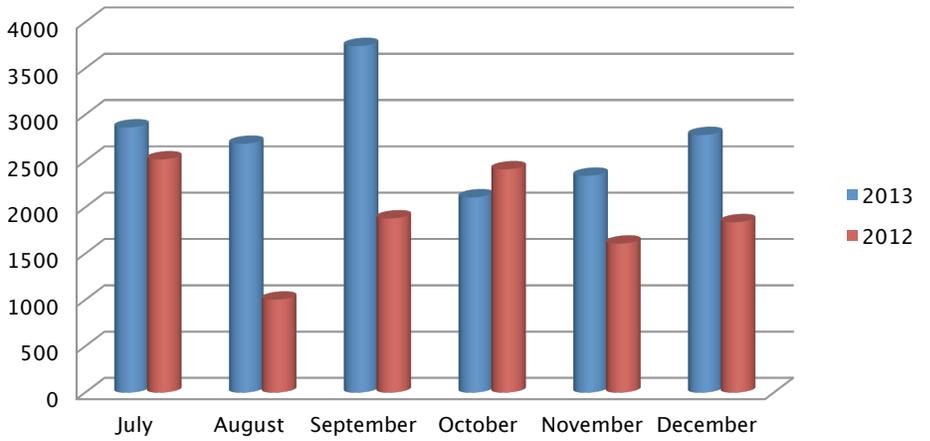
The USAID Primary Health Care Project in Iraq (PHCPI) is collaborating with the Iraqi Ministry of Health (MOH) to improve access to and quality of primary health care (PHC) services throughout the country. In September 2011, PHCPI implemented a nationwide baseline assessment to determine how best to support future improvements in the PHC system. Key findings of this assessment indicated a series of deficiencies at the PHC clinic level.

Among the results: In general, more than two-thirds (68%) of the PHC clinics (PHCCs) interviewed reported a need for essential medicines, equipment, and supplies. A functional laboratory is critical to the delivery of high quality PHC services.

Lab test results factor into approximately two-thirds (70%) of all patient diagnosis and treatment decisions. Health care staff who are forced to make decisions without the benefit of test results due to lack of lab equipment risk misdiagnosis or improper patient care. To address these issues, PHCPI has been working to refurbish and rehabilitate 36 model PHCCs.

The aim of this initiative is to provide these clinics with the essential standard equipment necessary to raise the level of care at those clinics to meet international standards and ultimately improve the quality of PHC services in Iraq.

These model clinics are designed to serve as a prototype for future replication and investment in PHC throughout Iraq. The Alzahraa PHCC in Diyala Province in central Iraq, is one of PHCPI's designated model clinics. Alzahraa serves a catchment population of 35,000 and sees roughly 300 patients each day.



	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2012	2518	1004	1881	2411	1609	1840	11,263
2013	2863	2686	3742	2108	2341	2781	16,521

Figure 1: Number of lab tests performed in 2012 and 2013

Prior to receiving new equipment from PHCPI, health care staff at Alzahraa could only perform the most basic lab tests, and often had to refer patients to a higher level of care if the tests they needed could not be performed at the clinic.

METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the impact of the provision of the new laboratory equipment to Alzahraa PHCC, PHCPI compared utilization of lab services at the clinic from July – December 2012 (prior to equipment delivery) to July – December 2013 (during and following equipment delivery).

RESULTS

Figure 1 below shows the number of lab tests performed over a six month period in 2012 versus 2013. In 2013, the total number of lab tests performed was greater than the number performed in 2012 for every month except October. In total, the number of tests performed increased from 11,263 in 2012 to 16,521 in 2013.

LESSON LEARNED

With the procurement of additional laboratory equipment, staff at Alzahraa PHCC are better able to provide accurate diagnosis and treatment to their patients on site without having to refer them to a higher level of care.