Project NOVA

Quarterly Report

Second Quarter Fiscal Year 2005

Introduction

Project NOVA is a five-year health project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the TASC2 contract no. GHS-I-802-03-00031-00 issued to Emerging Markets Group, Ltd. (EMG). Subcontractors participating in the implementation of the project are IntraHealth International and Save the Children.

USAID's Project NOVA is implementing project activities in cooperation with the Armenian Ministry of Health, Marz health organizations, and local non-governmental organizations. The goal of Project NOVA is to improve the quality and access of rural reproductive, maternal and child health nationally, and to build the capacity of national institutions to sustain such improvements over time.

This Project NOVA Quarterly Report describes the results of program activities for the period of January 1 to March 31, 2005. Project NOVA is now fully staffed and has successfully initiated marz and national level activities associated with the agreed-upon annual workplan.

Technical Progress

This quarter, Project NOVA achieved a significant result in the publication and distribution of the government approved guidelines on infection prevention in maternity hospitals. This result is a culmination of efforts of PRIME II and later Project NOVA to bring attention to the importance of safe, client-focused and infection-free maternity services. Other areas of progress include the following:

- Selection and preparation of six clinical training sites in Shirak and Tavush marzes.
- Completion and dissemination of the community and facility assessment in Shirak and Tavush marzes designed to help the Project target specific communities for intervention and serve as a project baseline.
- Initiation of the six-month training program for 27 health post nurses in Lori Marz.
- Selection of the communities in Shirak (20) and Tavush (10) to participate in the community partnership for health program and initiation of community assessments and meetings.

***AREA 1:* Improve reproductive health/maternal and child health performance of rural health facilities through training and equipment provision**

During the second quarter, the Project team worked with marz authorities to prepare clinical training sites to serve as the focal points for all clinical training. In each new marz, three facilities were selected – the marz-level maternity hospital, a central polyclinic or women's center, and a family medicine center. The Project signed memorandum of understanding with each facility to outline roles and responsibilities of both parties in project implementation, and worked with clinic staff to prioritize equipment and supply needs. Over the three month period, staff from each facility received a series of technical updates on different RH topics, including infection prevention and antenatal, postpartum, obstetric and infant care. Each facility received approximately 54 hours of instruction. Based on the outcomes of the clinical site preparation activities, the Project and the marz authorities agreed upon a list of 14 regional trainers who will lead the training programs in each marz.

The Lori Marz Health Department selected 27 communities to participate in the nurse training program as

part of the final year consolidation phase. Two one-week orientations took place in February to launch the self-paced training program.

The Project team organized a public tender to procure health post equipment and supply kits and received the bid packages. Selection of the best bid and distribution to health posts will take place next quarter. The Burns Supper committee submitted to Project partner IntraHealth International approximately $26,000 (funds raised from individual donations) to procure medical equipment, supplies and educational materials for three hospitals in Tavush marz. Thus far, Ijevan Hospital has received an ultrasound machine and an order was placed for an incubator.

During the next quarter, the project team will conduct training of primary care physicians and nurses, distribute clinical equipment and supplies, and plan interventions to support Basic Medical College and National Institutes of Health family nursing program.

AREA 2: Strengthen management and supervision of rural RH/MCH services

The first major activity associated with Area Two is the development of a management handbook targeting those primary health care managers who supervise RH/MCH care in rural areas. During this quarter, IntraHealth Management Consultant Mamuka Djibuti traveled to Armenia in late January to help launch the development of the handbook. While in Armenia, the consultant facilitated a series of discussions with national experts and primary health care managers and developed a framework and outline for the handbook. Throughout the rest of the quarter, the Project team facilitated the work of a team of national experts who drafted different sections of the handbook. A formal review of the handbook and development of the corresponding management training program will take place next quarter.

The second major focus in Area Two is instituting a facility level RH/MCH quality improvement initiative among primary health care facilities. IntraHealth Senior Performance Systems Advisor Lauren Crigler traveled to Armenia in March to provide technical assistance in the development of a concept paper on quality improvement and to introduce the approach and methodology to project counterparts. The consultant worked with Project staff to develop the QI framework and set of quality indicators, introduced the framework to each marz advisory board, and facilitated the selection of two quality improvement teams in each marz (each team consisting of a polyclinic, an ambulatory or health center and its attached health posts).

AREA 3: Improve RH/MCH policy formulation and implementation

In this quarter, the Project team organized a half-day official dissemination event for the recently approved regulations on infection prevention measures in maternity hospitals. Chief obstetrician/gynecologist of the country Razmik Abrahamyan and USAID Deputy Director Karl Fickenscher officially opened the event and leading RH and neonatal care experts described the contents of the new regulations to representatives from all the maternity hospitals in the country. One hundred copies of the regulations were disseminated and the government requested that the Project produce additional copies for further distribution.

Another major activity undertaken was the health systems review (formerly referred to as an anti-corruption assessment but revised based on USAID feedback) designed to help the Project better target its system-strengthening efforts. Emerging Markets Group consultant Alisa Periera conducted the assessment that entailed a literature review; interviews with government, non-government and international agencies; and health facility site visits. The first draft of the report is complete and will be finalized and disseminated in the next quarter with presentations at USAID and the Ministry of Health. The outcomes of this assessment will provide guidance to the project on key policy initiatives to undertake in the remainder of the workplan year.

Late last year, the Ministry of Health approved new national methodological guidelines on the treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) developed by the National STI Center (with partial support from the PRIME II project). The Academy for Educational Development (AED), through the USAID Armenia training program, is supporting the National STI Center in formal dissemination and training of specialists and primary health care providers in these new guidelines. Project NOVA staff coordinated closely with the National STI Center and AED in planning these events, and participated in the national launch. Project

NOVA training activities in STI integrated care will build on the training events undertaken by this initiative.

AREA 4: Increase consumer demand for services through community education and mobilization

The Project finalized selection of the local institutional NGO Ajakits to partner in implementing community activities in Shirak Marz. Project NOVA partner Save the Children drafted a subcontract and terms of reference for the NGO and initiated informal training for NGO staff. Final approval of the subcontract will take place next quarter.

Early in the second quarter, the Project team reached agreement with the marz advisory board on the criteria for selection and the final list of 30 communities to participate in the Community Partnership for Health (CPH) program. The selection criteria included the population size, presence of a health post nurse, readiness of community leaders and members to work actively to improve health, and the relative remoteness of the community. The Project team drafted an implementation plan scheduling community action planning meetings with all 30 communities over a six month period. At the same time, the community assessment and action planning meetings have already taken place in eight communities in Tavush marz. The community activities in Shirak will begin once the NGO subcontract is approved. Next quarter, Save the Children Community Mobilization Consultant Debbie Fagan will travel to provide support to Area Four activities.

The Project team reached agreement with Bars Media to design simple user-friendly client education materials for distribution in rural health facilities. The educational materials will undergo a formal review and approval process by USAID and Ministry of Health experts, and will be printed and ready for distribution next quarter.

Performance Management Plan (PMP)

In this quarter, Project NOVA staff completed a comprehensive community and facility mapping exercise in Tavush and Shirak Marzes. The assessment consisted of data collection in all rural primary health care facilities in each marz and involved use of twelve qualitative and quantitative instruments (observations, interviews, inventories) among health providers, clients and community members. Meetings took place in Tavush and Shirak to share findings with marz authorities. A national dissemination event was organized in late March to share preliminary findings with national counterparts. Approximately seventy representatives from government and international organizations attended the event. The national broadcast and print media covered the event.

In addition, Project NOVA created an ACCESS database for tracking training activities of the project. The database includes information on training events, trainers, clinical training sites and trainees.

Management, Collaboration, and Coordination

- Emerging Markets Group with assistance from the Chief of Party hired the health systems analyst, Gohar Jerbashian, who started in March. Save the Children hired the last field office driver.
- Project NOVA initiated procurement of two additional project vehicles in the second quarter and it is anticipated that the vehicles will arrive in the next quarter.
- The Project NOVA team drafted a project brochure, established a website, and created a monthly electronic newsletter. The first newsletter was distributed to project counterparts in March.
- Project NOVA staff participated in various meetings and events with government and international counterparts that served to help facilitate coordination of project activities in the country. Some of the critical meetings are outlined below:
    - Several meetings with the Ministry of Health and Macro International on the planning of this year's Demographic and Health Survey.
    - Coordination with the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to assist in the implementation of two of the USAID-supported health training activities – parental education and dissemination of the national guidelines on sexually transmitted infections.
    - Meetings and participation in a conference on evidence-based maternity care by the Japanese

government-supported maternal health project.

- Several meetings with Jynishian Memorial Foundation to discuss possible areas of partnership on policy and community-based health activities.
- Planning for Project NOVA participation in a regional conference on increasing access to family planning in Bucharest, Romania, including technical support to the MOH participants on a country presentation.
- Formal exchange sessions with Armenian Social Transition Program to technical approaches and lessons learned, particularly as they relate to sustainability of project interventions.
- Several meetings with Peace Corps representatives to identify possible Project NOVA communities in northern Armenia where new volunteers might be placed.

Progress toward implementation of the project workplan and achievement of PMP benchmarks and indicators

*Workplan***:** Project NOVA successfully accomplished nearly all the activities outlined for the second quarter of the annual workplan. Some delays arose related to timing of approvals for the short-term technical advisor in community mobilization and the institutional partner NGO subcontract. It is expected that final approvals will be received early next quarter and that these minor delays will not impact the overall implementation schedule for Area Four.

One areas of potential concern last quarter was the formal integration of Project NOVA training programs into the national training system. This quarter, Project NOVA staff held several meetings with government counterparts to clarify the next steps for approval of national trainers, training sites and curricula as well as for certification of trained providers. One important outcome of the various meetings is agreement with the National Institutes of Health to work with the Project to provide formal certification of the training programs. Exact details of this arrangement will be finalized next quarter.

*PMP benchmarks and indicators***:** The project now has baseline figures for all PMP indicators. To date, the project has made concrete progress on policy indicator, 3.1: new and/or updated policies/strategies or ministerial orders on RH/MCH through the MOH approval and distribution of the infection prevention and STI treatment guidelines. In addition, activities in other technical areas such as training, community partnership and quality improvement have contributed to initial progress in several other indicators.

PROJECT NOVA ANNUAL TRAVEL/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FORECAST
Fiscal Year 2005 (October 1, 2004 -- September 30, 2005)

Name of Traveler	NOVA Partner	Travel Dates	Title of Activity	Key Local Counterparts	Status of Travel
OCTOBER 2004					
Anna Benton	EMG	October 17-31	Participate in project start-up activities, clarify roles, communication and reporting relationships among partners	Local Office	Completed
NOVEMBER 2004					
No visits planned					
DECEMBER 2004					
Rebecca Kohler	IntraHealth	December 13 – January 16	Rest and Recuperation travel with family	NA	Completed
Larisa Aghababyan	IntraHealth	December 12 – 24	Conduct national trainer orientation and assist in plan for clinical training site preparation (Area 1)	National Trainers	Completed
JANUARY 2005					
Mamuka Djibuti	IntraHealth	January 17 – 29	Assist in the design of the management handbook (Area 2)	Management Working Group	Completed
FEBRUARY 2005					

Name of Traveler	NOVA Partner	Travel Dates	Title of Activity	Key Local Counterparts	Status of Travel
Alisa Periera (local consultant)	EMG	Feb – April (15-20 days over 4 weeks)	To conduct an anti-corruption assessment	All key counterparts	Completed
MARCH 2005					
Debbie Fagan	Save the Children	Last two weeks (dates TBD)	To provide on-site support to staff and local NGO partner	NGO (TBD)	Delayed till June
Sara Espada	IntraHealth	March 28 – April 8	To conduct a program monitoring visit, participate in project retreat, and attend baseline study dissemination	All key counterparts	Delayed till late April
APRIL 2005					
Organizational Development Specialist (local or regional)	IntraHealth	April 4- 8 One week	To facilitate a 2-day staff team building retreat	Local project staff	Delayed till fourth quarter
Lauren Voltero	IntraHealth	April 4 – 17	To design the facility-level quality improvement framework and launch facility-level support	Shirak and Tavush marzes	Completed
Rebecca Kohler and Gohar Panajyan	IntraHealth (to Romania)	April 11-18	Attend regional family planning conference		Completed
MAY 2005					
Iren Sargsyan	Save the Children (to the US)	May 22-30	Attend Save the Children health leadership group training		

Name of Traveler	NOVA Partner	Travel Dates	Title of Activity	Key Local Counterparts	Status of Travel
JUNE 2005					
Health Systems Specialist (TBD)	EMG	Two weeks (dates TBD)	To conduct a decentralization and RH/MCH financial resource flows assessment	Key government counterparts	
JULY 2005					
Anna Benton	EMG	One Week (dates TBD)	To participate in annual implementation planning for FY 06	Project staff	
AUGUST 2005					
RH Clinical Specialist (TBD)	IntraHealth	Two weeks (dates TBD)	To develop detailed workplan for strengthening basic nursing education	Pre-service education institutions	
SEPTEMBER 2005					