



## Quarterly Report October – December 2006: 1st Quarter FY07

This Project NOVA Quarterly Report describes the results of programmatic activities for the period of October 1 – December 31, 2006. Project NOVA is in full-scale implementation for all marz-level interventions in Armenia in accordance with the revised Statement of Work for Project NOVA.

### AREA 1: Improve RH/FP/MCH Performance of Select Networks

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#### Tangible Result: Providers' knowledge and skills improved

- Under the terms of the Safe Motherhood Clinical Skills training, Project NOVA ***trained a total of 38 midwives*** from Health Centers and Regional Hospitals (21 from Kotayk and 17 from Gegharkunik marzes) in the expanded role of midwives (Module 8, SMCS training package). This training concentrated on the use of the partogram and labor complications management, as well as provided refresher training in labor management and antenatal care. Module 8 training took place at Abovyan and Martuni Maternities during October 3 – 13, 2006. Results of the pre- and post- tests indicated that after completion of this training module, ***overall knowledge of midwives in key training topics increased significantly from 60.3% to 98.8%***.
- To strengthen the maternal and child health training component, the project has formed ***Working Groups in Newborn and Infant Care, and Obstetrics and Gynecology***. Newly formed Working Groups include leading Armenian neonatologists, pediatricians and obstetrician/gynecologists as well as Project NOVA staff. The purpose of these Working Groups is to develop/adapt NOVA training modules to be introduced as part of the Comprehensive MCH training package<sup>1</sup> in the five new project marzes. In November – December Working Groups developed the following four draft training modules:
  - ~ 3-day Essential Newborn Care and Resuscitation for neonatologists, ob/gyns, anesthesiologists, nurses and midwives, and 2-day Management of Newborn Diseases for neonatologists from Maternities, Marz-level Hospitals and Health Centers;
  - ~ 5-day Infant Care for pediatricians, family medicine doctors from Polyclinics, Medical Ambulatories and Health Centers;
  - ~ 5-day Antenatal and Postpartum Care for ob/gyns and midwives from Women's Consultation Centers, Maternities, Marz-level Hospitals and Health Centers; and
  - ~ 5-day Basic Emergency Obstetric Care for ob/gyns, anesthesiologists and midwives from

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<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive MCH training package includes essential newborn care and resuscitation, infant care, antenatal and postpartum care, basic emergency obstetric care and infection prevention.

Maternities, Marz-level Hospitals and Health Centers.

Training modules include agendas, course description, knowledge assessment tests, skills assessment clinical checklists and state-of-the-art technical training materials.

Interactive teaching methodology and competency-based learning approaches will be applied during the delivery of the above mentioned-training modules.

- The ***report on the Ijevan Study*** testing integration of the family planning counseling and referral into pediatrics services is now finalized and is available in English. Findings from the study indicate increased use of family planning services provided by district obstetrician/gynecologists at the Ijevan Maternal and Child Health Center as a result of family planning counseling and referrals by pediatricians. Study findings and recommendations will be disseminated among key national and regional stakeholders. As this study has proven that basic family planning counseling and referral by pediatricians have positive impact on the utilization of family planning services and does not require substantial financial recourses and provision of expensive equipment and supplies, Project NOVA will ***incorporate training sessions on postpartum family planning counseling and referrals into training modules for neonatologists, pediatricians and family medicine physicians*** during Project NOVA's upcoming training activities.

#### **Tangible Result: Higher level sites equipped and renovated**

- Using WHO List of Basic Materials for MCH, Project NOVA developed a ***standard list of basic equipment and supplies*** for higher level facilities. The list was shared with marz-level health authorities and head physicians from the new project-supported marzes. Project staff is now in the process of getting quotes from local suppliers for items on the list.

#### **Tangible Result: Training capacity strengthened**

- In order to increase regional and national training capacity, project staff identified additional healthcare providers with clinical experience and expertise from previous project marzes to participate in the ***Training-of-Trainers in RH/MCH***. An international training expert, Dr. Larisa Agababian, traveled to Yerevan to conduct a five-day TOT for 15 ob/gyns, neonatologists, pediatricians and family doctors from Shirak, Tavush, Kotyakh and Gegharkunik marzes and Yerevan. Results of the final course evaluation demonstrated that ***participants' knowledge increased more than 15% from the average pre-course score of 60% to a post-course score of 77%***. This activity is necessary for successful implementation of upcoming training events in the five new marzes.
- Project staff continues to lead ***Working Group*** discussions on improving the existing pre-services nursing/midwifery training curriculum. Working Group members include representatives from the Yerevan State Basic Medical College, Gyumri State Medical College and Armenian Ministry of Health. Revised pre-service curriculum will incorporate a Safe Motherhood Clinical Skills in-service training package and training methodologies to build clinical competencies of nursing college graduates.
- From November 6-10, Project NOVA carried out a five-day ***Instructional Design Workshop***

for 13 faculty members from the Yerevan State Basic and Gyumri Medical Colleges to adapt NOVA's in-service training materials for nursing colleges. Dr. Larisa Agababian, an international training expert, and NOVA's Maternal Health Training Coordinator Karen Adamyan facilitated the training. Participants were divided into five technical groups (by five key topics: general nursing, obstetrics, infection prevention, newborn/infant care and working with the community) and worked on the development of the training package using elements of modern instructional design. By the end of the training, participants acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to create a pre-service training package for nursing colleges with a special emphasis on clinical skills transfer using competency-based approach. Results of the evaluation indicated that ***average knowledge of participants increased almost 20%: from 53.9% at pre-test to 73% at post-test.***

- Following completion of the Instructional Design Workshop, faculty members from Gyumri and Yerevan State Medical Colleges with technical support from Project NOVA staff adapted and compiled ***the final draft of the pre-service nursing/midwifery curriculum*** in five key topics. The new methodologies and approaches learnt at the Instructional Design course were largely used during curriculum development process. The pre-service curriculum includes a detailed course outline, an agenda for all technical sessions, knowledge and skills evaluation instruments (i.e. tests and clinical checklists) and detailed description of topics. Final version of the curriculum will now undergo final editing and will be submitted to the national leading specialists for a technical review.

## **AREA 2: Strengthen management and supervision of RH/FP/MCH services**

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### **Tangible Result: Quality improvement system at higher level sites introduced**

- In preparation of switching implementation of programmatic activities to five marzes simultaneously, project staff visited the five new target marzes – Ararat, Armavir, Aragatsotn, Vayotz Dzor and Syunik – to meet with health department officials and head physicians of Maternities and marz-level Hospitals. The purpose of the visits was to introduce Project NOVA and to collect information in key categories needed for the selection of five networks. The team collected basic information regarding the potential networks and ***identified five health networks*** using the following criteria: health indicators, physical conditions of facilities, number of physicians, number of health posts and level of involvement from international NGOs. The following five networks with a total catchment area of over 250,000 people, 3,000 annual births, and over 150 health care in-patient and out-patient facilities were selected for future interventions:
  - ~ Vedi in Ararat marz;
  - ~ Armavir in Armavir marz;
  - ~ Talin in Aragatsotn marz;
  - ~ Vayk in Vayotz Dzor marz; and
  - ~ Sisian in Syunik marz.
- As part of quality improvement interventions, project staff conducted a ***series of monitoring trips to evaluate progress made by Quality Improvement Teams (QIT)*** previously established in Kotayk and Gegharkunik marzes. Routine self-assessments exercises were

conducted at the Garni Health Center and Ddmashen Medical Ambulatory: both *facilities reported a 30% increase in their quality indexes*. Members of the QIT carried out half of the Action Plan developed by the Ddmashen Medical Ambulatory. The Ambulatory had also established a client feedback system via a suggestion box and improved the link with its facility supervisor. Many tasks listed in the Action Plans of the Garni Health Center and Ddmashen Ambulatory were accomplished, including renovation of two health posts, purchase of needed equipment, provision of health educational materials, and ensuring confidentiality during client visits by nurses. In addition, suggestion boxes for clients were established in all health posts supervised by the Garni Health Center. Suggestions from these boxes are routinely reviewed and addressed by health post nurses.

### **AREA 3: Improve RH/MCH policy formulation and implementation**

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#### **Tangible Result: RH/FP/MCH policies reviewed**

- Project NOVA contributed to the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Program (PRSP)* discussions organized by the PRSP Secretariat and Ministry of Finance and Economy as it relates to health system reforms in Armenia. Information and recommendations of NOVA's Rural Health Post Review were shared with a larger audience during discussions on "Main Issues of the Medical Services Quality Assurance and Economic Accessibility of Medications" and "Increasing Accessibility and Utilization of Health Care Services Included in Basic Benefit Package".
- Economic Development and Research Center (EDRC) reviews the depth and extent of economic and social challenges that Armenia currently faces. Since 2003 EDRC has been publishing Economic Policy and Poverty (EPP) Journal. Along with publishing of the EPP Journal, EDRC has also initiated a TV program aired on the Yerkir Media TV Channel that covers various socio-economic topics of strong public interest. In November 2006 at the request from the EDRC, *Project NOVA expressed its views on the issue of the low fertility rates in Armenia*. During the TV Program aired on Friday December 22, 2006 from 18:55 to 17:20, several national experts, including NOVA's Gohar Jerbashian, Policy and Knowledge Management Team Leader, contributed to the broad discussions on the subject of low fertility rates in Armenia and came up with a number of suggestions and policy change recommendations. The program will air again in January.
- Based on the New Role of Nurses and Nursing Development Strategy prepared by the MOH in collaboration with WHO in 2004, the Community/Rural Health Post Nurse job description was developed and then approved by ministerial decree No. 940 on October 14, 2005. In order to comply with requirements posed on legal/normative acts, the job description recently underwent technical review. *Registration of the Community/Rural Health Post Nurse Job Description with the Ministry of Justice* will turn it into a normative act, and it will therefore, be considered mandatory for all healthcare providers in rural Armenian communities. However, since the job description references the Armenian Law on Healthcare, its registration is postponed until the law is approved.

### **Tangible Result: Evidence based RH/FP/MCH service delivery promoted**

- *Search for evidence-based RH/FP/MCH practices* is underway in preparation for upcoming training interventions and establishment of the first Armenian peer-review Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology, Perinatology and Neonatology (JObGPN).

### **Tangible Result: Best practices documented and disseminated**

- The Project produced three issues of its *monthly newsletter* and disseminated them to over 150 individuals from local and international organizations electronically, as well as mailed to marz-level health departments. The newsletters highlighted selected programmatic activities completed each month. October News depicted rejuvenation and furnishing of Rural Health Posts and the provision of medical supplies and equipment to the 79 nurses in Gegharkunik and Kotayk marzes who underwent Project NOVA's Safe Motherhood Clinical Skills training. November News described the process of the pre-service nursing/midwifery curriculum development and participation in the Annual Peace Corps Development Fair. December News highlighted Project NOVA's launch in five additional Armenian marzes. In December, the Project also developed a new Success Story reporting achievements made in quality improvement interventions at the health care facility.
- Design and *development of the Armenian version of the Project website* was initiated. The majority of the pages are uploaded to the web. The Armenian version of the project website will be fully functional by March 2007.
- Project NOVA continues to publicize its work within Armenia and internationally. This quarter alone we presented *four posters and gave one presentation* disseminating project's strategies and successes among national and international public health community.
  - ~ Rebecca Kohler, Gohar Jerbashian, and Zaruhi Mkrtchyan presented a poster entitled "Access to Free Pregnancy Care in Armenia: A Right or a Privilege?" at the 13th *American Public Health Association* meeting in Boston on November 4-8, 2006.
  - ~ Gohar Panajyan, Lilit Hovakimyan and Zaruhi Mkrtchyan presented three posters at the annual *European Public Health Association* in Montreaux, Switzerland on November 16-18, 2006: "Primary Health Care Providers Performance in Delivering Maternal and Child Health Services in Armenia", "Family Planning Counseling Practices of Family Physicians Trained in Reproductive Health", and "Competency-based Training in Reproductive Health for Rural Nurses in Armenia".
  - ~ Irina Saghoyan, Save the Children Country Director, delivered a presentation on the Project NOVA community mobilization and education strategy, activities and achievements at the *IMCI Community Component Meeting* organized by WHO, UNICEF, and MOH in Yerevan on November 20-21, 2006.
  - ~ Project staff submitted two abstracts for the *2007 Global Health Council (GHC) Conference*: 1) Community Partnership for Health in Rural Armenia, and 2) Pediatricians and Gynecologists Together for Better Family Planning Services to share NOVA's lessons learned with the international public health community. The abstract by Gohar Panajyan (See Attachment 1.) on the partnership between gynecologists and pediatricians was accepted for poster presentation at the GHC in May 2007 in Washington, DC.

## **Tangible result: Knowledge management capacity improved**

- During October 2006 several new tables, forms and reports were added to the Project *Management Information System*. Particularly the Monitoring and Evaluation database was adjusted and tested based on the new requirements.
- An interactive *Human Resources dataset* that tracks and displays project staff vacations, sick leaves and personal hours accrued and taken was developed and tested, and then introduced to staff in November.
- Development of GIS layers, serving as a base for GIS maps, for the five additional project-supported marzes continued. Detailed *maps of target health networks were designed*, submitted to USAID/Armenia and are now posted on the project website.
- Technical *Report on the Application of Geographic Information System in Armenia: Opportunities for Expanded Use in the Health Sphere* was prepared. The report is designed to stimulate interest towards GIS technology among Armenian health administrators by demonstrating its use to improve medical monitoring and disease surveillance, as well as overall planning and analysis of health indicators. It covers the current status of GIS in Armenia, information on organizations implementing GIS tasks in Armenia, recommendations for GIS applications in the Armenian health sector, and a Project NOVA-developed coding system used to map out communities and health facilities in Armenia. Copies of the report are available in English and Armenian as a PDF, and will be posted on the Project website in January 2007.
- In order to improve collaboration between numerous health agencies/organizations working in Armenia, maximize financial resources and avoid duplication of efforts, Project NOVA has collected information and developed a *map of healthcare facilities renovated* by various national and international organizations throughout Armenia. Its draft was printed and presented during the Project NOVA Launch meeting in December 2006. The map is in the finalization process based on feedback received from various stakeholders. Dataset containing information on facility type, year and extent of the renovation, as well as the name of the organization managing renovations was added into the Project database.

## **AREA 4: Increase consumer demand for high quality RH/FP/MCH services through community education and mobilization, renovation and equipment of facilities**

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- In October Project NOVA conducted Health Post *close-out events for a total of 30 rural communities in Kotayk and Gegharkunik* marzes. In November-December 2006, Project staff prepared a final report on each participating community.
- Six rural communities from Shirak (Arevshat - Artik region; Nahapetavan - Artik region) and Tavush (Lusadzor - Ijevan region; Voskepar - Novemberyan region; Jujevan - Noyemberyan region; and Baghanis - Novemberyan region) marzes were identified to receive seed funding to improve the quality of and access to RH/MCH services through the Community

Partnership for Health initiative. Sub-agreements were signed with all six communities in August – October 2006. Communities established Health Action Groups (HAGS) and developed their Action Plans, which included renovations of their respective Health Posts. **Renovations of all six Health Posts were completed in November - December 2006.**

- As part of the Community Partnership for Health initiative in FY05, Project NOVA established HAGs in 30 rural communities in Shirak and Tavush marzes. In order to empower HAGs and reinforce the work initiated by Project NOVA, the Project issued a purchase order to the local NGO Ajakits. During the period of August – December 2006, Ajakits continuously supported and visited all 30 rural communities in Shirak and Tavush marzes. As a result, Health Post nurses in 30 communities continued conducting health talks with community members on antenatal care, benefits of breastfeeding, infant care and personal hygiene. Over a four month period nurses conducted **a total of 107 health talks reaching over 1,424 people**, primarily women and children.
- Project NOVA evaluated a total of 103 rural communities for the inclusion in the Community Partnership for Health Initiative as part of the baseline assessment conducted in the five additional target marzes. Based on information gathered and community selection criteria, project **preliminary identified 60 rural communities** for the next three-year period. The list of communities will be finalized by the end of January 2007.
- In December Project NOVA initiated the **screening of local NGOs** in Ararat, Aragatsotn, Armavir, Syunik and Vayots Dzor marzes to enhance the Project's community education and mobilization component and increase sustainability of project interventions. A total of 27 local NGOs with relevant experience in community development and mobilization were identified. As a result of preliminary interviews, 8 NGOs were short-listed. Final selection of only four NGOs will be completed by mid-January.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation, Performance Management Plan**

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- In October 2006 project staff completed and produced the **Baseline Report for Kotayk and Gegharkunik marzes** in English. The Armenian version will be printed and disseminated among local counterparts in January-February 2007.
- During October and December 2006 NOVA's **results framework and Performance Management Plan (PMP) were updated** to reflect the revised Statement of Work, modified project implementation and evaluation strategy as well as new requirements from the USG FY07 Operational Plan. Previously used baseline assessment instruments were updated and the following new instruments were developed:
  - ~ Postpartum client exit interviews questionnaire;
  - ~ Postabortion client exit interviews questionnaire; and
  - ~ Household Knowledge, Attitude and Practice survey questionnaire.
- In November 2006 Project NOVA conducted a baseline **assessment of five select health networks** in the additional project-supported marzes. A total of 17 data collectors visited more than 150 service delivery points to assess:

- ~ Physical conditions of facilities within selected networks;
- ~ Availability of basic equipment, medical supplies and medications;
- ~ Provider performance in antenatal care, postpartum care and newborn/infant care; and
- ~ Client flow and services utilization at network facilities.

In addition, a survey of 500 households in the new Project marzes was conducted to collect baseline data on the women's reproductive and maternal and child healthcare knowledge, practice and attitudes.

- In December 2006 the **baseline data were entered** into the Project NOVA MIS, which will be cleaned and analyzed during the next quarter. The final report will be produced, translated into Armenian and distributed to the counterparts during the second and third quarters.
- During this reporting period, the **project contributed to the vast majority of project indicators directly or indirectly**. However, the project made significant progress on the PMP by contributing to the following project indicators:
  - ~ Number of healthcare providers trained in RH/FP/MCH technical areas disaggregated by training type, provider type, sex and level of service provision;
  - ~ Number of new regional and national instructors in RH/FP/MCH technical areas trained;
  - ~ Number of NOVA monthly news produced and disseminated;
  - ~ Number of professional publications, presentations and posters at international, national and regional RH/FP/MCH conferences; and
  - ~ Number of health talks conducted by health post nurses on key RH/FP/MCH topics at project-supported sites.

Implementation Progress for Q1 FY07								
NOVA Progress Indicators	FY05 ACTUAL (A)	FY06 ACTUAL (B)	FY07 TARGET (C)	FY07 ACTUAL (D)				Project- today TOTAL E=A+B+D
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Number of people trained in maternal and newborn health	229	259	200	51 <sup>2</sup>				539
Women	N/A <sup>3</sup>	N/A	N/A	51				
Men	N/A	N/A	N/A	0				
Number of people trained in reproductive health and family planning	46	50	20	15 <sup>4</sup>				111
Women	37	41	N/A	13				91
Men	9	9	N/A	2				20
Number of providers completed Management/Supportive Supervision training	45	38						83
Number of facilities to which basic equipment and supplies were distributed	105	73	0	0				178
Number of new RH/FP/MCH training curricula/packages developed and	1	2	4	0				3

<sup>2</sup> SMCS Module 8 Expanded Role of Midwives (38 participants); Instructional Design (13 participants)

<sup>3</sup> Information on sex of participants of the clinical training sites' trainings is not available

<sup>4</sup> TOT in RH/MCH (15 participants)

Implementation Progress for Q1 FY07								
NOVA Progress Indicators	FY05 ACTUAL (A)	FY06 ACTUAL (B)	FY07 TARGET (C)	FY07 ACTUAL (D)				Project- today TOTAL E=A+B+D
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
introduced								
Number of sites at project-supported marzes with project NOVA support	6	6	5	0				12
Number of policy documents reviewed	2	2	2	1				5
Number of professional publications, presentations and posters at international, national and regional conferences	8	4	4	5				17
Number of new approaches successfully introduced	0	1	1	0				1
Number of Health Posts rehabilitated	30	30	6	6				62
Number of higher level facilities rehabilitated	N/A	N/A	20	0				0
Number of Health Action Groups established	30	30	50	6				66
Number of follow-up Action Plans developed			0	0				0
Number of clinical training sites established	6	6	5	0				12
Number of health talks conducted by Health Post Nurses	600	423	TBD	107				1,130

## Management, Collaboration, and Coordination

- **Progress towards Annual Workplan:** Project NOVA successfully accomplished all activities planned for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of the Annual Workplan. See the updated Annual Workplan report for the status of each activity.
- On December 20 Project NOVA held an official Launch meeting to *acknowledge the beginning of its activities in five additional marzes – Ararat, Armavir, Aragatsotn, Vayots Dzor and Syunik*. The meeting took place at the Ani Hotel in Yerevan. A total of 89 participants including representatives from the Ministry of Health, Marzpetaran and marz-level health officials, international and local NGOs, and USAID attended this event. Event participants learned about project achievements in the first two years of its implementation and its scope of work moving forward, geographical and thematic coverage, selected networks, project technical areas, strategies and interventions. Meeting agenda, pictures, and presentations are now available on the Project NOVA website in both English and Armenian.
- **Human resources:** All project staff salaries were updated as per the revised USAID/Armenia FSN scale, and approved by the mission in November 2006.
- **Staff development:** USAID posted 12 online global health courses on key Maternal and Child Health subject areas. Course topics include: antenatal care; essential newborn care;

HIV basics; IUD; logistics for health commodities; M&E fundamentals; malaria; preventing postpartum hemorrhage; standard days method; TB basics; and youth reproductive health. Four Project technical staff completed courses relevant to NOVA in October – November 2006 and received on-line certificates of completion from USAID.

- **Corporate visits and program support:** Amy Armistad, IntraHealth, traveled to Yerevan, Armenia on October 15 - 28 to provide programmatic, managerial, and technical assistance to Project NOVA. Ms. Armistad assisted the Project team with budget preparations and human resource management. She also contributed to the technical discussions on the revised SOW and conducted a staff development exercise on English writing.
- **Coordination with other International Projects in Armenia:** Project NOVA continues to collaborate with other international projects and organizations in Armenia to capitalize on their technical expertise, maximize the use of human and financial resources and avoid duplication of efforts. The following is a list of events attended by project staff during this quarter:
  - MSH RPM Plus workshop on Supply Management and Use of Medicine for Primary Health Care in Armenia on November 21, 2006;
  - National Workshop on Strategy for Child and Adolescent Health and Development lead by WHO, MOH and Arabkir Joint Medical Center – Institute of Child and Adolescent Health on November 22 – 23, 2006;
  - UNICEF/WHO/MOH Community IMCI Community Meeting on November 20 – 21, 2006;
  - Development Credit Authority Training for USAID/Armenia and implementing partners on October 18 - 19, 2006;
  - The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Peace Corps Development Fair on November 22, 2006;
  - PHCR workshop on Promoting the Upgrade of Family Medicine Clinical Training Centers/Sites on December 28, 2006.

## **Obstacles and Measures Undertaken to Address Them**

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The revised project implementation strategy and PMP called for updated and additional data collection instruments as well as a baseline data collection strategy to be carried out in five new marzes simultaneously. Two interns from AUA were identified and recruited to assist the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with baseline assessment preparations. Upon completion of the baseline assessment, both interns also assisted Project staff with data entry.

## **Upcoming Major Activities**

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- Finalization of the Comprehensive MCH training package
- Finalization of the pre-service nursing/midwifery training curriculum
- Procurement of equipment and supplies for health care facilities
- Identification of regional trainers in five additional marzes
- Orientation for National RH/FP/MCH trainers on NOVA's Comprehensive MCH training

package and other upcoming training activities

- Development of the Universal Quality Improvement (QI) module
- Update of the existing QI instruments
- Updating Module 7 of the Safe Motherhood Clinical Skills training to incorporate gender perspective and additional practical sessions on working with community
- Development of the client-education brochure: Things Women Need to Know after Having a Baby (tentative title) for a rural audience
- Initiation of activities towards establishment of the first Armenian peer-review Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology, Perinatology and Neonatology (JObGPN)
- Finalization of the Health Post Review Report
- Launch of the Armenian language Project NOVA website
- Identification of four local NGOs in support of Community Partnership for Health (CPH) initiative
- Identification of rural communities for CPH

## Attachment 1: Global Health Council Conference Abstract

**Title:** Pediatricians and gynecologists together for better family planning services

**Presenter:** **Gohar Panajyan;** Project NOVA/USAID, Reproductive Health Advisor, IntraHealth International

### **Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this presentation the participants will be able to:

- List key components of the study designed to test the impact of pediatrician referrals on the use of family planning services provided by obstetrician-gynecologists
- Learn about successful collaboration between pediatricians and gynecologists in rural areas of Armenia that lead to increased utilization of family planning services

**Partnership model:** Establishing an effective referral system between pediatricians and district-level ob/gyns to provide family planning services for postpartum women.

**Background:** In a time of economical and political transition in Armenia when financial resources are scarce, women in rural areas rarely come to see a gynecologist for a routine check-up, much less a family planning visit. More than half of all pregnancies in Armenia are unintended with a total abortion rate of 1.8. Usually women interact with reproductive health services during antenatal care, pregnancy and delivery, which are less than ideal time to talk about family planning. Women in Armenia are unlikely to return for a postpartum follow-up visit to the obstetrician-gynecologist, but will come to see a pediatrician for a routine well-baby visit. Therefore, pediatricians have an opportunity to see women of reproductive age and equip them with information on family planning options available to them in general and during the postpartum period in particular.

**Design/Methods:** Under the terms of USAID-funded Project NOVA, IntraHealth conducted a study to identify the impact of family planning counseling and referrals provided by pediatricians during the postpartum period on the utilization of family planning services. The study took place at the Ijevan Maternal and Child Health Center (intervention site) and Dilijan Polyclinic (control site) during April - June 2006. Six pediatricians from the Ijevan MCH Center received a contraceptive technology update, and were trained in family planning counseling and referral to the district ob/gyn. A special referral card was developed to keep track of family planning referral clients. In addition, two district ob/gyns from both the intervention and control sites received refresher training in family planning service delivery and the tracking of referral cards. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS to identify control and intervention groups' demographical comparability and synthesize information.

**Results/Outcome:** During the 3-month study, the intervention site pediatricians referred 119 women to the district obstetrician-gynecologist for family planning services versus only 21 client referrals at the control site. Data collected prior to the study at the intervention site also indicates a similar number of pediatrician – gynecologist referrals: 25 women referred over a three month period. A significant proportion of referred clients at the intervention site: 91 out of 119 women (76.4%) visited obstetrician-gynecologist to obtain family planning services, out of which 28 received the family planning method of their choice. Twenty five women left the district ob/gyn with barrier methods (condoms and spermicides), two had an IUD inserted and one woman received hormonal pills. As a result of the partnership, utilization of family planning services in rural Armenian settings increased more than four fold. This approach can be applied throughout Armenia and other countries where obstetrician-gynecologists are the only health care providers with the legal authority to provide family planning services, including prescriptions for contraceptives.

**Impact of Partnership:** Historically family planning programs engage obstetrician/gynecologists, nurses and midwives to increase the use of family planning methods. The role of pediatricians as a family planning liaison was always underestimated and never tested. This study confirmed that ob/gyns successfully partner with pediatricians to reach postpartum clients with key family planning messages. Such collaboration leads to a significant increase in family planning referral and utilization of family planning services.

**Co-Authors:** **Rebecca Kohler,** IntraHealth International, **Lusine Ghazaryan,** PhD candidate, SUNY, **Karina Baghdasarova,** IntraHealth International, Project NOVA/USAID