

iv) A Specific Story

Partnering at Karasuu Maternity, Kyrgyzstan

Shayrgul A., 34, exhausted but happy, is breastfeeding her son at Karasuu Territorial Hospital, Osh Province, Kyrgyzstan. This time her husband, Murzabek U., 34, has been supporting her in the delivery. Indeed, before UNICEF started to implement the Effective Perinatal Care (EPC) programme in 2010, relatives were not allowed to visit maternity wards, not to mention to participate in the delivery itself. But now, partner delivery is a common practice, and both Shayrgul and Murzabek see this as a very positive change. In fact, Shayrgul says that the impact of the husband's



presence does not only limit to the time at the ward, but he has also been much more supportive at home after discharge and takes part more actively in minding the children.

Karasuu maternity is among the 20 target hospitals of the UNICEF programme in southern Kyrgyzstan that has been supported by the UN Delivering as One programme and the Government of the Great Britain. Karasuu is among the regions with the fastest growing population which is reflected also in busy delivery rooms of the maternity assisting over 4,000 births each year. Despite the rush, midwives and nurses are satisfied with their work. Midwife Ainagul Ranbaeva, 41, says that through the UNICEF programme she has gained a great deal of confidence and professional pride. One of the objectives of the EPC programme has been to strengthen the clinical skills of midwives so that they can assist in deliveries independently. “Before in case of complications, like severe bleeding, all we could do is to wait the doctor to come” she says and continues that now midwives are taking care of the deliveries themselves and in case of an emergency they know exactly what to do.

Ainagul remembers the time when mothers were giving birth side by side in two huge delivery rooms that in winter were cold as ice. Midwives were bustling from patient to another them having not any privacy whatsoever. But now the hospital has reorganized the ward and currently eight private delivery rooms are fully equipped with temperature as high as 28 C°. Indeed, compared to 2010, each year there are less and less complications in mothers and newborns. Thanks to improved delivery management skills of medical workers and investments in basic medical equipment, only within two years' time cases of post-partum bleeding of women has decreased by two thirds and number of newborns in need of intensive care almost by 70%. As one of the midwives summarizes it: “We love Effective Perinatal Care”.

The positive change is felt also at the cabinet of the Hospital Director Kanybek Muratov, who has commanded over 15 years the Karasuu hospital. “One of the greatest achievements of the UNICEF Effective Perinatal Care programme has been its contribution to teamwork meaning that all professionals have clear roles and responsibilities”, he concludes and says that the Effective Perinatal Care has brought along the idea of effectiveness to care procedures. As the extensive Soviet health care system was rigid and funding was only based on the number of patients treated, the national health care reforms in Kyrgyzstan emphasize decentralization with a functional referral system and a strong role of the primary health care. Dr. Muratov tells that through the EPC programme, the hospital has been able to make savings as unnecessary treatment has been reduced. These funds are channelled to improve the outdated infrastructure and purchase medicine

and equipment. Dr Muratov has a clear vision of how to spend a small part of the savings: as the spring comes, the hospital yard will turn to a garden with flowers and benches for mothers and their relatives to sit on.

As parents of already six children, Shayrgul and Murzabek think that this was probably the last stay for them in Karasuu maternity. However, thousands of mothers and newborns will continue to benefit from the comprehensive programme each year. The impact of the EPC programme has gone beyond pure medical procedures. With small, but profound changes, such as opening up the doors of the maternity wards to husbands and relatives a major impact on welfare of mothers has been achieved. With similar approach, UNICEF has extended its programme to cover the antenatal, emergency and paediatrics care in three provinces in southern Kyrgyzstan and plans are already made to scale up the programme to the North.

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