

## Bringing Primary Care to Baku's IDP Community

Walking through the halls of the Baku building where she lives, it doesn't take long to realize how important primary care nurse Rasmiya Zeynalova is to the other IDPs who reside there. People eagerly call out praise for this kind and gentle woman who takes care of them when they are sick, gives advice when they have questions, and offers comfort in a place where the very notion of security is alien.

"The thing that pleases me most about my job is when I get to see first-hand that someone feels better because of the care I provide," Zeynalova says. Of course, that is one of the best parts of any nurse's job, she admits, "But, here in the IDP settlement, it is even more rewarding."

Some 26,000 IDPs live in the Narimanov District, a densely-populated section of the city. Most of them—Zeynalova included—fled their homes in the early 1990s to escape the border conflict with Armenia.

"Many people from my village settled in the complex where I live now," Zeynalova explains, noting that it is comprised of four buildings that used to be sports hostels. "I was a pediatric nurse back home and began working in the same capacity at Polyclinic #14 in 1998."

Responsible for overseeing the care of 900 children—one-third of them IDPs—Zeynalova spends three hours each day in her office and another three conducting home visits. "Because of economic conditions here, most infants are born at home so, for newborns, a physician/nurse team makes a home visit within the first week. Their parents are supposed to bring them to the Polyclinic for their polio and tuberculosis vaccinations when they are five or six days old," she says, noting that if the child hasn't been inoculated within the first two months, the vaccinations are administered during a home visit.

"As a nurse, I visit newborns every week for the first month or so to make sure the baby is thriving, that the umbilical cord is not infected, and to answer any questions



PHOTOS: SUZANNE E. GRINMAN



Thanks to training and supplies she received through her work with AIHA's Baku/

Portland partnership, nurse Rasmiya Zeynalova is better able to care for her patients, one-third of whom are IDPs. The medical bags given to partnership nurses are filled with equipment and supplies—a digital thermometer, otoscope, blood pressure cuffs, bandages, and antiseptic, for example—that nurses use on home visits.

the new parents might have," Zeynalova continues. Responsible for keeping accurate records about the development of her young patients and for ensuring they receive a physical examination at least once a year, she makes notations on how well they sleep and any illnesses or abnormalities she observes. "If there is a problem, I either address it myself or, if it is serious, ask one of the doctors to examine the child."

When the Polyclinic—through the Narimanov District Health Administration—became involved in AIHA's Baku/Portland partnership, Zeynalova participated in a series of training workshops developed to give nurses who work with IDPs the special skills necessary to address their health-related needs. These workshops helped Zeynalova

Disease prevention, health promotion, and the treatment of existing illnesses are key elements underpinning AIHA's Primary Healthcare Program. Partners work to address the needs of their communities, integrating health-care into the framework of social services and increasing opportunities to reach the broadest segment of the population. In Azerbaijan, the Baku/Portland partners developed model "medical bags" to enhance the ability of physicians and nurses to provide care while treating internally displaced persons. This is the story of one nurse—an IDP herself—who uses the equipment everyday; the story of a young girl she treated is on the other side.

broaden the scope of her work, enabling her to provide care for adults as well as children. She also received a nurse's bag complete with medical equipment including a stethoscope, blood pressure cuffs, digital thermometer, otoscope, and many other useful supplies.

"I had seen many of the instruments in the bag before and was familiar with most, but some—the otoscope, for example—I had to attend a partnership seminar to learn how to use," she says, pointing out that her new knowledge and medical equipment have combined to make her job much easier. But, the real change is in her attitude. "I've been a nurse for a long time, but this training I received has really changed the way I look at myself and my profession. I have much more confidence in my ability to give my patients the care that they need," Zeynalova maintains.

And, patients such as nine-year-old Rufina, would agree. "Rufina's mother knocked on my door late one night this past spring, sobbing that her daughter was dying. I grabbed my bag and ran over there," she recounts, explaining that the child's temperature was dangerously high. "I gave her an injection that brought the fever down and followed her recovery closely," Zeynalova concludes, laughing as she says, "Now Rufina says she doesn't need to visit the doctor—she has me to take care of her."

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