

A Note From the Executive Director

Making a significant impact on health care in the CEE and NIS requires more than just developing model programs; it also requires an effective dissemination strategy, making both health care professionals and consumers aware of successful programs and supportive of their implementation. Over the course of the past 18 months, partnerships have been developing Women's Wellness Centers in cities across the NIS using a common model that emphasizes comprehensive services and a cost-effective, health promotion philosophy. In a collaborative effort with Ministries of Health, model neonatal resuscitation training programs are being similarly replicated by AIHA-supported partnerships throughout Ukraine and Russia.

Promoting professional and public awareness and support for these new models of care became an easier task last fall when US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton toured partnership institutions in Almaty, Kazakstan; Tashkent, Uzbekistan and L'viv, Ukraine. The tour was covered widely by media in the NIS and US, and Mrs. Clinton was joined by Uzbek First Lady Tatiana Karimova in Tashkent and by Ukrainian First Lady Ludmila Kuchma in L'viv.

In addition to underscoring the fundamental collaboration between governments, health care providers and communities that has made the partnership program so successful, Mrs. Clinton's visit gave voice to the testimony of the partnerships' ultimate beneficiaries--patients and their loved ones. A beautiful, healthy three-year-old in L'viv was held aloft by a proud father as her mother described how the partnership's neonatal resuscitation and intensive care unit saved the girl's life. In Almaty, a teenage girl told Mrs. Clinton that after her own visit to the Women's Wellness Center, she talked her mother into making an appointment there.

First ladies across the NIS and CEE have been unflagging allies of the partnership program. This issue of CommonHealth not only reports on Mrs. Clinton's trip, but on the Fifth Annual Partnership conference for the NIS in Atlanta, Georgia last October, in which Armenian First Lady Ludmila Ter-Petrossian actively participated. She told conference participants that Mrs. Clinton had served as a role model for her own work as first lady, particularly in promoting improved health care services for women and children. Latvian First Lady Aina Ulmane joined partners for the opening of the Riga Nursing Resource Center and has also been active in promoting prevention and treatment of TB.

As role models and agents of change, first ladies are in a unique position to shape public support for partner initiatives. Their advocacy has made the critical difference for many partner institutions struggling to improve the quality and availability of care for all our families.