

## Prompt Treatment Helps a Young Girl in Baku

Nine-year-old Rufina didn't feel well as she made her way home from school one afternoon last spring. As the normally vivacious girl slowly walked along the dusty street to the IDP settlement where she, her parents, her older sister Guba, and younger brother Tural live, her head began to ache and her joints stiffened. She wondered how she would make it up the four flights of stairs to the small apartment where her family has lived since they fled their home in the village of Alibaili nearly 10 years ago.

"I knew Rufina was ill. She had been fighting a cold for a few days and her throat was very red and irritated, making it a little difficult for her to swallow," Yegana Samadova, Rufina's mother explains, noting that her daughter also had a slight fever. "We don't live in the best of conditions—this building was once a hostel for a sports institute and it is very crowded," she continues, noting that there are no toilets or bathrooms inside and they have frequent power outages. "We also have to go outside to get water several times each day, lugging the heavy jugs up to the apartment step-by-step. It's easy for people—especially children—to get very sick under these circumstances, so we have to be extremely careful."

Later that night, after everyone had gone to bed, Yegana remembers being disturbed by a strange noise. "I thought I heard one of the children speaking, so I went to investigate. That's when I saw Rufina thrashing about under the covers, mumbling incoherently," she says, describing the panic she felt when she discovered her child was burning up with a fever. "Her skin felt like it was on fire and I couldn't seem to wake her. I was afraid that she would go into convulsions if I didn't do something immediately to get her temperature down."

But what could she do? It was the middle of the night, the electricity was out, and she had no medication in the house. Immediately Yegana thought of her cousin, Rasmiya Zeynalova, a nurse who lives across the hall and often treats people in the building. Using a candle to light her way, Yegana rushed to Zeynalova's room. Although it was very late, the nurse answered the door almost immediately and was faced with the sight of a distraught Yegana, who grabbed



PHOTOS: SUZANNE E. GRINMAN

Cousins Yegana and Rasmiya (above left and right), with their children. Both families fled their war-torn home in Azerbaijan's Zangelan Region and have been living in an IDP enclave in Baku for almost 10 years. A cheerful girl who loves to draw, play jump rope with her friends, and work on mathematics problems in school, Rufina is grateful that nurse Rasmiya Zeynalova was able to help her.

her hand and begged her to help Rufina. "I told Rasmiya to come right away, that I thought my child was dying," Yegana recounts, noting that Zeynalova quickly snatched up her nurse's bag and a pen light before rushing to examine the sick girl.

"Rufina's temperature was so high—more than 40 degrees Celsius—and she seemed delirious, but Rasmiya remained calm," Yegana recalls, explaining that the nurse used a digital thermometer she pulled from the bag she carried with her, as well as an otoscope and tongue depressor to check the girl's throat using the pen light for illumination. Zeynalova then gave Rufina an injection to lower the fever and gave Yegana instructions for her care, promising to check back the next morning.

"I didn't even know Rasmiya was in our apartment until she gave me the shot," Rufina says, smiling shyly. "The next day, I felt a little better and Rasmiya sent my mother to the pharmacy to buy some medicine that they used to swab my throat so it

Life is difficult for the nearly 580,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Azerbaijan. For those who have settled in Baku's densely populated Narimanov District, primary care services are provided through local polyclinics. AIHA's Baku/Portland partners are working to improve the quality and accessibility of these services, in part, by offering targeted training for nurses working with IDPs and refugees that emphasizes the basic skills necessary to provide comprehensive care in clinical settings and during home visits. This is the story of a young girl who was treated by one such nurse; the nurse's story is on the other side.



would heal quicker. I'm glad she lives so close to us and, when I was completely well, I went to her apartment to thank her for being such a good nurse."

Acknowledging that her family has been very lucky as far as their health is concerned, Yegana echoes her daughter's sentiments about Rasmiya and the care she provides to the IDP community. "Aside from the incident with Rufina, we haven't had any major trouble and, whatever ailments we have had, Rasmiya has always been more than capable of treating. She gives us a sense of safety and hope. We all know how skilled and caring she is and life would be even more difficult without her close by."

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