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**TURKMENISTAN**

## SUCCESS STORY

# New Method Aids TB Counseling

**USAID helps TB specialists improve communication with patients, enhance treatment outcomes.**



*Doctor Sakhedov shares new counseling techniques with his colleagues in Mary. Photo Maya Nedirova.*

**USAID and Project HOPE introduced a simple yet effective “flip-chart” method to enable TB specialists explain to their patients the complexities of their disease and its treatment.**

One of the key elements in the eradication of tuberculosis is the patient’s adherence with a rather long treatment course for this disease that becomes asymptomatic to the patient after the first states of treatment, yet still not cured. Effective counseling is essential in ensuring that patients understand their infection and get fully cured, so that the disease does not spread further or morph into more dangerous forms. Yet TB specialists often find it difficult to answer the broad range of questions about TB treatment and care, explain in a simple and effective way to convince their patients.

To address this challenge, USAID and Project HOPE have developed trainings and tools to help TB specialists work communicate with their patients who depend on them. In November 2008, USAID and Project HOPE organized a training of trainers in the capital city of Ashgabat for 20 doctors from around the country to introduce a simple yet highly effective method for counseling. The doctors were demonstrated how to use a ‘flip-chart’ with illustrations and informational prompts to guide medical specialists through the counseling session, and to help the patients visualize and absorb the provided information. This tool had been developed and used successfully by USAID and Project HOPE throughout Central Asia to improve the care that TB specialist provide to their patients. Now adapted for use in Turkmenistan, with illustrations by a local artist, the flip-chart has been published in the Turkmen and Russian languages, and distributed to Tb specialists around the country.

One of the specialists trained in the flip-chart method was TB doctor Muhammed Sakhedov from Mary Province. “Our skills in counseling must constantly be improved and adapted in practice, because our patients’ treatment outcomes are greatly affected by precisely these skills,” says Dr. Sakhedov. “Since this training, I have had several cases where these new skills have been very helpful for me to persuade and effectively counsel patients,” he says.

Together with other participants, Dr. Sakhedov was also trained how to transfer his counseling knowledge to other medical professionals. Within a couple of months since their training course, Dr. Sakhedov and his colleagues have trained 142 nurses from TB hospitals and primary health care facilities, so that more people across Turkmenistan can benefit from the assistance provided by the American people through USAID and Project HOPE.