

Voices **PRIME II**

Improving Providers' Response to Violence against Women

"The violence against women program has had a great influence on our health providers. They now understand that many complications occur as a result of violence, problems that cannot be treated or prevented without addressing the issue of violence upfront."

Dr. Efrosya Nahapetyan, head of women's consultation at Polyclinic 8 in Yerevan, Armenia, has witnessed changes among her facility's providers as the result of a pilot program to expand the role of the reproductive health sector in helping Armenian women overcome violence.

Launched by the PRIME II Project in 2002, the program in Polyclinic 8 has demonstrated a model for reproductive health providers to effectively screen, educate and refer women who experience violence. The program has also influenced national health policy to recognize violence against women (VAW) as a public health concern and helped providers collaborate with others working at the community level against VAW.

VAW includes the physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse of women and girls. Global research suggests that one out of every three or four women experiences violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lives. In Armenia, national research indicates that both men and women have attitudes of tolerance toward "wife-beating" and smaller qualitative studies uncover alarming levels of VAW. Of 1457 women screened for VAW at Polyclinic 8 between December 2003 and June 2004, 30% had suffered from VAW at some point in their lives.

"Discrimination against women and girls in Armenia starts practically at birth," relates one client. "A boy-child is celebrated as the heir of the family name and a girl-child is perceived as one who will move to her husband's home to become a future wife and mother. From a very early age, a girl is treated like a guest in her own home... We need to bring up children with a real respect toward women, not the traditional worshipping in words but humiliation in action."

According to Dr. Nahapetyan, the VAW program has had a positive influence on clients as well as providers. "Patients understand the concept of violence now—its consequences, how to prevent it, and in which institutions you can receive relevant care."



Dr. Efrosya Nahapetyan



Educational materials on display at Polyclinic 8

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