



SUCCESS STORY

Bringing Health Care Home

Community organizers are linking the community to their health facilities—stepping up improved services for children and pregnant women.



Image: Chemonics

Child receives CBC examination at the Howara clinic.

"This is just the beginning. The Oreef community is determined to be a 'Community Champion' in delivering quality healthcare services for all its residents, especially women and children," Community-based organizer Ni'mat Odeh.

A few months ago, the average number of women who sought antenatal and child care at the clinic in Oreef, a village known for its high birth rate, did not exceed four. But after the USAID's Palestinian Health Sector Reform and Development Project (the Flagship Project) creation of a Community-Clinic Committee, the initial results were encouraging. Twenty-four women showed up in the clinic in one day to receive the quality health care they were lacking. This was achieved through the establishment of a group of community-oriented women who formed a Community-Based Organization (CBO), and are determined to improve the healthcare of Oreef's women and children.

After conducting door-to-door visits to assess the health care needs, they identified key causes behind women refraining from seeking antenatal care. Expectant mothers were hesitant to utilize the clinic due to the lack of adequate medical equipment (such as ultrasound) and because the gynecological services at the clinic were being provided by a male doctor. The dynamic group of community coordinators worked hard to gain the community's trust and heighten communication with the Ministry of Health's (MoH) Primary Health Clinic supervisors.

The coordinators swung into action and established dialogue with the Clinic's supervisor through their joint Community-Clinic Committee to ensure the assistance of the MoH Nablus Directorate. A specific day for a female gynecologist, nutritionist, and a mobile ultrasound machine was scheduled to bring health care home at Oreef clinic.

"On that day, a total of 46 women, including 24 pregnant women received healthcare services and were advised on general nutrition, a higher number than all clinic visits for the last five months," said Ni'mat Odeh, the Oreef community coordinator. "Now the Directorate will send a female gynecologist once a week, to serve the needs of Oreef's pregnant women and children," said Ni'mat.

In addition to lacking services for pregnant women, Oreef community coordinators discovered that 62 Oreef children under the age of three had never had a Complete Blood Count (CBC) or Hemoglobin blood tests (HB). Parents refrained from testing their children because of difficulty in accessing transport to the Directorate central health clinic in nearby Howara. Parents also complained that they were occasionally turned away because it was the wrong test day at the Howara clinic.

The linkage fostered between the community and the health facilities through the committee again proved efficient. Transportation was provided to bring 22 children to Howara and the resulting tests showed that four of them were found to be anemic.

"Now that we gained the people's trust, the plan is to continue this process for all children under three. This is just the beginning."