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The Hanan Mother, Child Health & Nutrition Project: Improving Access and Quality of Healthcare at Abu Hanek Clinic in Hebron, West Bank

Economic instability in the West Bank threatens the quality and accessibility of health services and essential medications for women and their children. In the city of Hebron, most health clinics are specialized and often too expensive. Women struggle to find clinics that are capable of helping them and their children with health issues they face, like antenatal and postnatal care and malnutrition of their children,.

In response, USAID is supporting the Hanan Mother, Child Health & Nutrition Project, a three-year initiative which aims to improve the health of vulnerable, Palestinian women of reproductive age and children under five. The project is implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. By procuring medical equipment and supplies, providing international protocols and guidelines, and conducting formal and on-the-job trainings for health workers, the Hanan Projects supports 118 primary health care clinics in the West Bank and Gaza.

In central Hebron, health workers at the Abu Hanek clinic receive trainings from Hanan specialists in antenatal and postnatal care and counseling, child nutrition and growth monitoring, acute respiratory infection, diarrhea diseases, infection prevention control, and clinic management, among others. Following initial trainings, Hanan specialists provide continued supportive supervision to health workers.



Ms. Amani prepares three topics weekly and lets women choose which she will present. Her health education sessions cover danger signs in pregnancy, diarrheal disease, oral re-hydration therapy and others.

“I am myself in my first trimester and a mother of one,” says Ms. Amani, Abu Hanek Clinic Lab Technician. “The trainings not only helped me teach other women at the clinic, but helped me personally. Until Hanan, we did not know about the importance of antenatal care in the first trimester. We did not know about exclusive breastfeeding. Women were on their own.”

Ms. Amani understands that the women who come to see her at Abu Hanek need more than just medications or one-time visits. She gives weekly 1-hour health education sessions to women on topics of their choosing, from danger signs in pregnancy, to exclusive breastfeeding, to oral re-hydration therapy. Before Hanan, counseling was not part of the specialized service package provided at Abu Hanek. “Before counseling, women would come to receive antenatal care but not postnatal care,” says Ms. Amani. “They would come only once. Now they come back, they know about our nutrition clinic, our growth monitoring. One service leads to another, and we are in constant contact.”

Most of the doctors at Abu Hanek are women, and like Ms. Amani, their ability to relate to their patients transforms the patient-doctor relationship. Dr. Hind Za'try, one of Abu Hanek's physicians, sees 25-35 patients a day and provides individual counseling for women on multiple topics. One patient revealed: “My first pregnancy I went to a private doctor, but now it is too expensive. I used to come to Abu Hanek for the nutrition clinic, and Dr. Hind told me about the pregnancy services. There is a pharmacy here, a lab, and unlike the private doctor it is open every day, so I can come when I need to. Dr. Hind is more of a sister than a doctor to us.”

The support Hanan provides to Abu Hanek is coupled with support from the USAID-funded Emergency Medical Assistance Program, EMAP. The two projects collaborate to help clinics provide a complete and high quality service that meets women's and children's needs. EMAP provides Abu Hanek with pharmaceuticals, including antibiotics and iron and folic acid supplements, that are essential to the provision of maternal and child health and nutrition services. Without the cost reduction that the program allows, medications would not be accessible at Abu Hanek. Dr. Hind explains, “EMAP is the only source of essential medications for many clinics in Hebron. Without their help, drugs would just be too expensive for the women here.”