

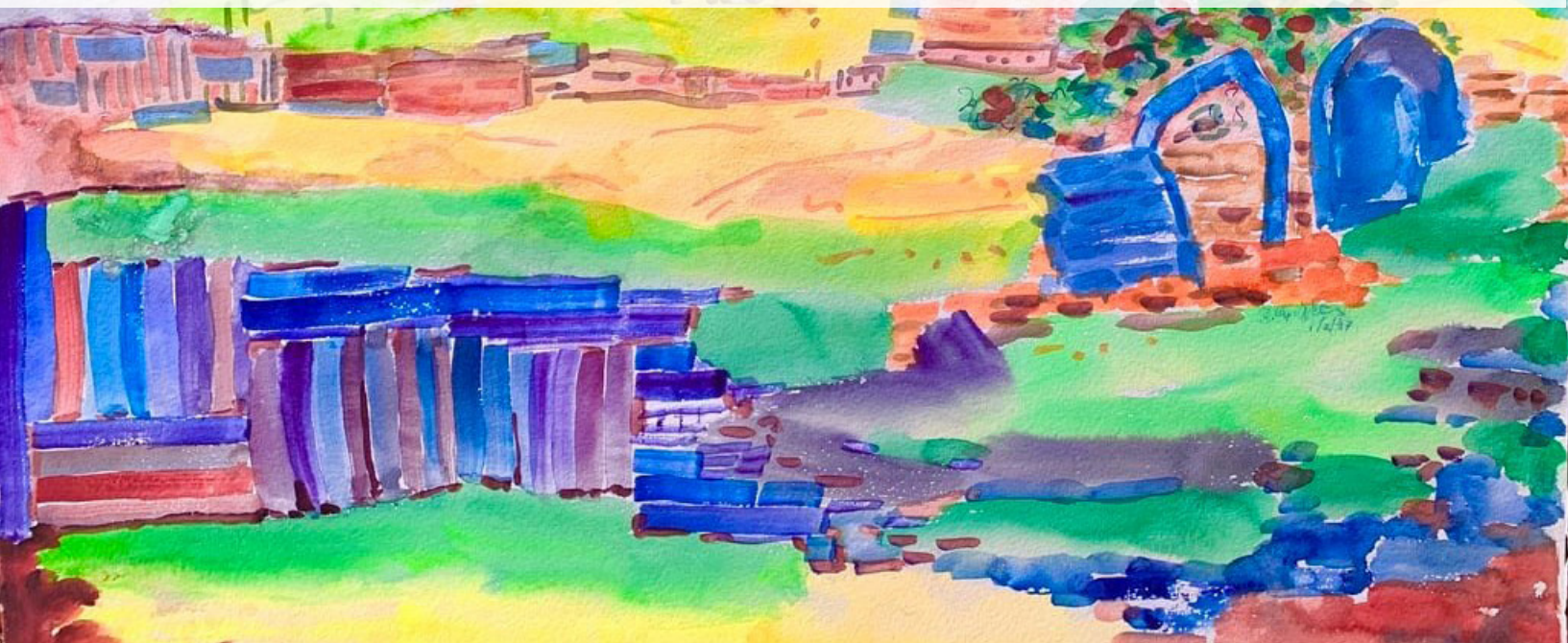


**Avedisian Onanian Center for Health
Services Research and Development**

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Hato vt 11/14/20

“Entrepreneurs *in* Health” *(EIH) Program*

2020 Annual Report



Introduction

In 2006, Gerald Turpanjian, renowned philanthropist, Trustee Emeritus and long-time benefactor of the American University of Armenia (AUA) donated \$5 million to the University to stimulate and promote rural economic development. The donation served as an impetus to establish the Turpanjian Rural Development Program (TRDP), which aimed at providing education and entrepreneurship opportunities to people living in the rural communities of the Republic of Armenia, Republic of Artsakh, and Samtskhe-Javakheti (Javakhk) region in the Republic of Georgia. To this date, TRDP has successfully trained 1,245 rural residents who have completed the entrepreneurship courses, of whom 423 have launched businesses and created 433 jobs.

A decade later, the expressed interest of TRDP applicants and the growing need for local private practices in healthcare served as key drivers for establishing the Entrepreneurs in Health (EIH) new program in 2017. EIH was launched by the AUA Turpanjian School of Public Health and aims to increase access to quality health services in the rural communities and regional small towns of Armenia, Artsakh, and Javakhk by supporting the establishment and/or expansion of private health practices.

The main components of the EIH program include:

- Provision of free-of-charge courses that cover four main subject areas:
 - » Entrepreneurship Skills training that results in each participant completing a Business Plan of the business they propose to create
 - » Basics of Healthcare Quality Management training that results in each participant completing a Quality Assurance Plan
 - » Healthcare Accounting skills training
 - » Preventive Dentistry training
- Arrangement for successful graduates to receive low interest (6%) loans from a local bank
- Continuous coaching and professional support
- Collaboration with diasporan professionals
- Monitoring and evaluation of established private practices
- Additional support to applicants from border communities
- Community-based Preventive Dentistry projects for those beneficiaries engaged or interested in providing dental services

This report depicts the EIH program activities carried out in the year 2020 and the key accomplishments that also reflect the successful entrepreneurship of program beneficiaries. In the first instance, the report describes how the program addressed the challenges imposed by COVID-19, then presents performance results under the educational component, subsequently also reporting on collaborative endeavors and other entrepreneurial achievements.

1. Adapting to COVID-19 Conditions

Following the announcement of the emergency situation in Armenia in March 2020, the EIH program took the necessary measures to adapt its operations to the government mandate and circumstances imposed by COVID-19. The adaptation plan included: Transitioning all EIH teaching and learning activities to online. Eliminating other face-to-face interactions with program applicants and beneficiaries similarly

transferring those to an online platform. Limiting field trips and transitioning to online all interactive consultations with beneficiaries and monitoring their business progress. Carrying out the entire application process online. Continuously monitoring COVID-19-related situations in EIH communities. Providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to EIH beneficiaries involved in patient care in COVID-19-imposed conditions.



Meeting with EIH beneficiaries May 2020



Meeting with EIH beneficiaries Nov 2020

2. EIH Educational Component

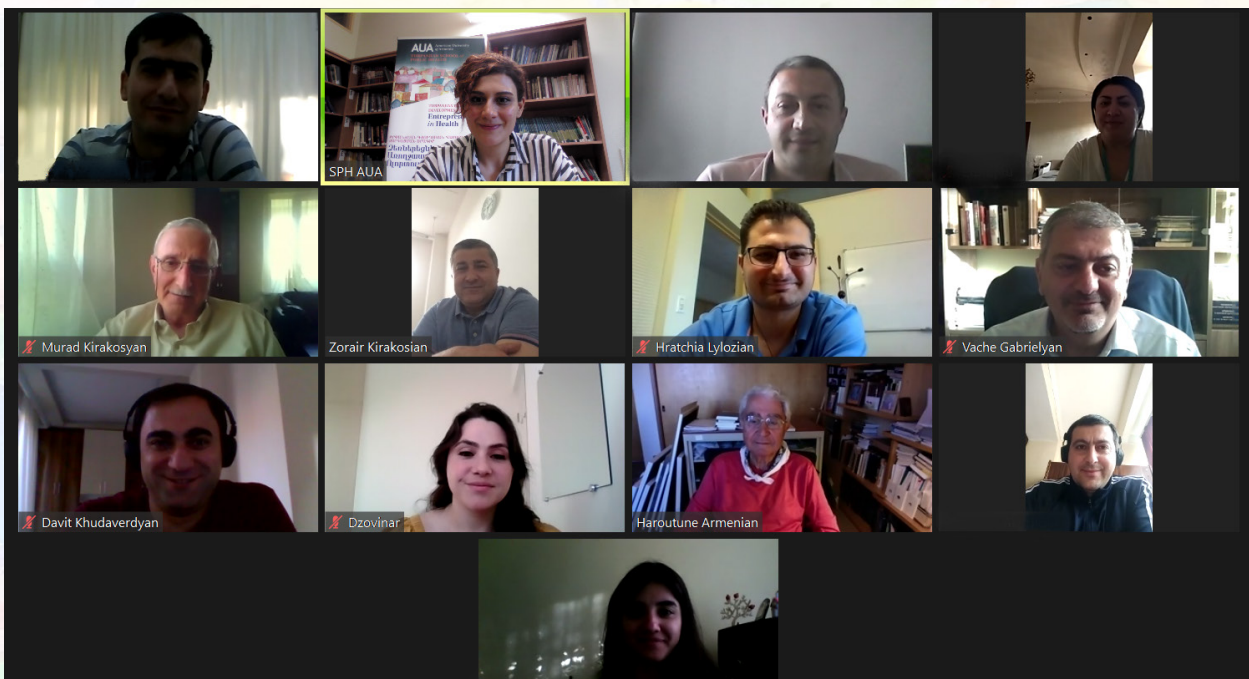
2.1 Courses in Entrepreneurship Skills and Healthcare Accounting for the new EIH Participant Cohort

The 60-hour course in Entrepreneurship Skills was organized on January 17 through March 20, 2020, for the newly admitted EIH cohort. The last two sessions of the course coincided with transitioning to online Zoom learning. All seven participants successfully completed the course, of whom six submitted individual Business Plans. Concurrently, the 18-hour course in Healthcare Accounting was delivered on

February 14-22, 2020. On May 21, 2020, all six participants presented their Business Plans before a committee of experts comprising Dr. Vache Gabrielyan (Dean of AUA Manoogian Simone College of Business and Economics); Zorair Kirakosyan (TRDP Field Operations Manager); Dzovinar Melkom-Melkomyan (AUA MPH and MBA '11); and the local bank representative.



Course in Entrepreneurship Skills held on Jan 17-Mar 20, 2020



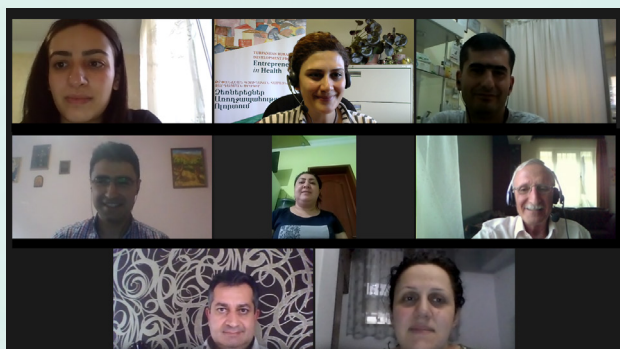
Presentation of Business Plans to the Committee of Experts

2.2. Course in Basics of Healthcare Quality Assurance Management for Enrolled EIH Participants

The Basics of Healthcare Quality Assurance (QA) Management course, as adapted to online teaching, was held in the period July 13-August 14 through the online Zoom platform. Of the seven participants in the course, five successfully completed it (Pic. 8). The participants received 33 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) credits

approved by the Ministry of Health of Armenia.

The course concluded with presentations by participants of their individual Quality Assurance Plans (QAP) on September 2, 2020, before AUA School of Public Health senior researchers Dr. Anahit Demirchyan and Dr. Vahe Khachadourian. (Pic. 9).



QA course, Jul-Aug, 2020



QAP presentations to the experts

2.3 Course in Preventive Dentistry for Enrolled EIH Participants

The first training on Preventive Dentistry was held in the period Aug 25-27, 2020, through the Online Zoom platform (Pic. 10). Those EIH participants with interest in and/or plans for

providing dental services participated in the training. The participants received 5 CPD credits approved by the Ministry of Health of Armenia.



The first training on preventive dentistry

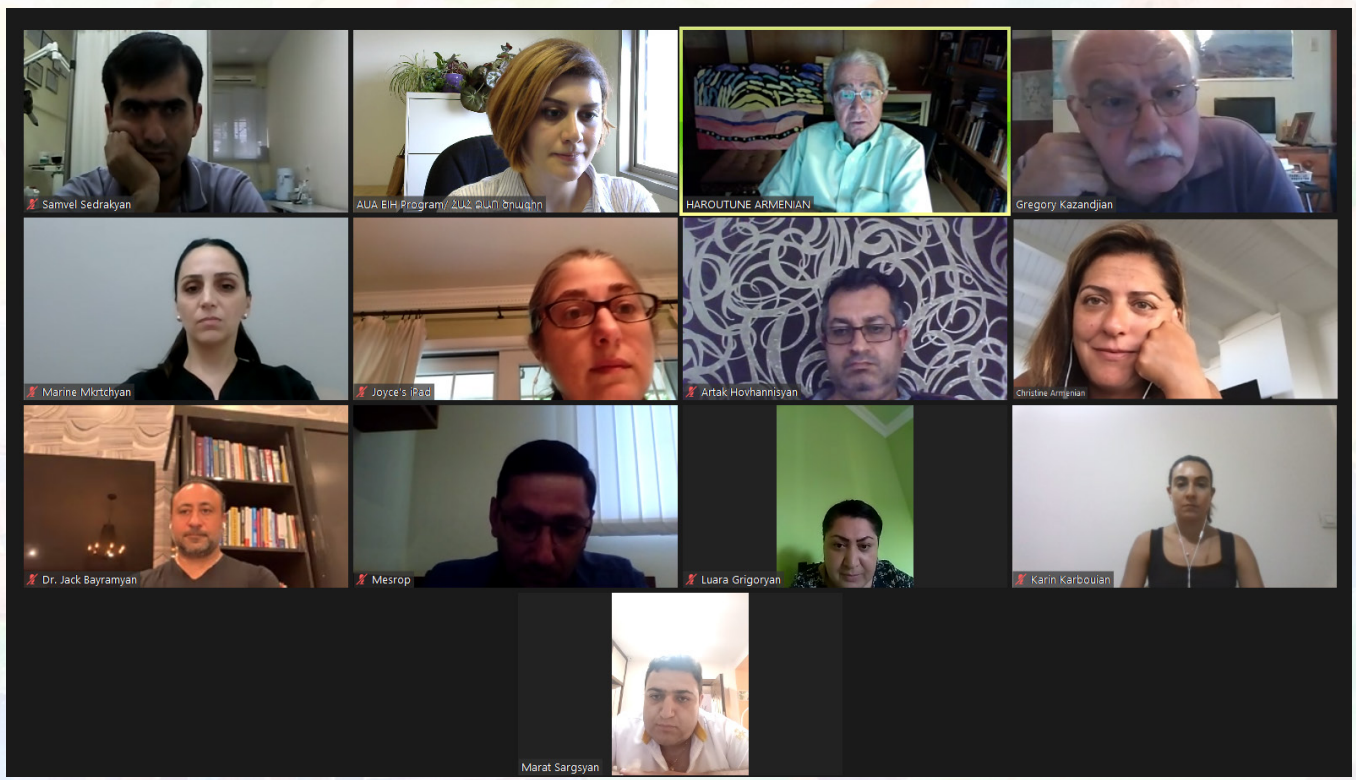
3. Strengthening Collaboration with Diasporan Armenians

Integral to the EIH program is the mentorship component, which focuses on establishing collaborative ties between EIH beneficiaries and Armenian-American professionals in the field to ensure the continuous improvement of the quality of the services they provide in their respective clinics. The mentorship component of the program was piloted in 2020. The volunteering mentors and EIH program beneficiaries jointly developed the rules of engagement intended to derive optimal results from their collaboration.

“The collaboration between Armenia and the diaspora should not be limited to donations of equipment or humanitarian assistance. We can strengthen health providers, and transfer knowledge and skills through mentorship. Mentorship is a very bidirectional type of engagement. While sharing their experience from the clinical field and providing guidance

to private practices, mentors learn much more about the health system in Armenia and the healthcare environment of a specific region,” remarked EIH Executive Committee member Dr. Shant Shekherdimian. On September 10, 2020, the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) organized a town hall meeting with EIH Chair and AUA President Emeritus Dr. Haroutune Armenian, EIH Coordinator Dr. Astghik Atanyan, EIH Field Operations Manager Dr. Hratchia Lylozian, and EIH Executive Committee member Dr. Shant Shekherdimian. They presented the EIH project’s mission and objectives, information on the participation of EIH family physician beneficiaries in the primary care response to COVID-19, and a range of contributions from the Turpanjian School of Public Health to Armenia’s COVID-19 response. The Voice of Armenians TV program of New York covered the event.

Harout 10/19/20

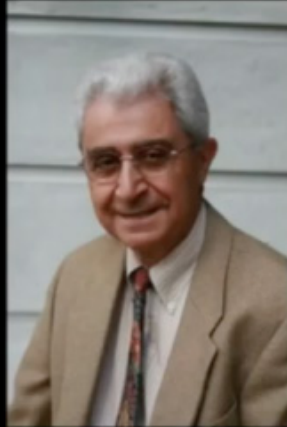


Meeting with mentors and beneficiaries in the pilot phase of the EIH Mentorship Component

AUA Turpanjian Rural Development Program & Entrepreneurs in Health



Astghik Atanyan, MD, MPH



Haroutune Armenian, MD, DrPH



Shant Shekherdimian, MD, MPH

AAHPO town hall discussion

4. Strengthening Preventive Dentistry in EIH Communities

Taking into account the expressed interest among EIH applicants and participants in establishing and/or expanding dental services in rural Armenia, the EIH executive committee decided to add the EIH Preventive Dentistry component in 2019. The overarching purpose of this program addition is to improve the oral health of the residents in those rural communities through the services of EIH-supported dental clinics. In the initial phase of implementation late last year, the EIH program invited Adrine Reganian, instructor of dental hygiene at Pasadena City College, California, to conduct a Training of Trainers (TOT). AUA Master of Public Health (MPH) program graduates

with a background in dentistry participated in the TOT. At the conclusion of the TOT, Dr. Marine Mkrtychyan (MPH '19) and Dr. Karin Karbouian (MPH '16) adapted and translated into Armenian the training materials to best address the local issues of dental hygiene.

After completing the Preventive Dentistry course, EIH beneficiaries are working on project proposals, which include expanding the scope of services provided by EIH dental clinics by offering up-to-date preventive dental care and raising awareness of dental hygiene and preventive dental care.

5. New Practices Supported by EIH Program

5.1 Expansion of Services Provided by Private Family Medicine Center in Talin

Founded by Dr. Tamara Gevorgyan, the “Narek” health center provides family medicine services in the town of Talin, Aragatsotn region. Established about six years ago, the center has been providing Basic Benefit Package services financed by the Government of Armenia for the last five years and is currently serving about 5,000 residents. In addition, the center offers laboratory diagnostic services and consultations with an endocrinologist and a neurologist.

As a beneficiary of the EIH program of the AUA Turpanjian School of Public Health (SPH) Dr. Gevorgyan was able to expand the laboratory diagnostic services available at her clinic adding biochemical, serological, and immunological laboratory testing.

“We used to refer patients to other healthcare facilities for simple diagnostic procedures, which was creating additional hassles for them,” noted Dr. Gevorgyan, adding “Now all the necessary tests are available in our facilities.”

Dr. Gevorgyan had learned about the EIH

program during the course in Healthcare Quality Assurance organized by SPH for physicians working in regions. She applied to the program, successfully completed all the required courses, and presented her Business and Quality Assurance plans to an expert panel. Upon the approval of the EIH Executive Committee, Dr. Gevorgyan qualified to receive financial assistance to purchase laboratory equipment.

Despite being an experienced entrepreneur before joining the EIH program, Dr. Gevorgyan asserts that the program was instrumental in the improvement of her practice operations.

“I had some skills before joining EIH, but not everything was clear to me: for example, how to choose development strategy, how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our Center, how to improve our services. This program provided me with comprehensive knowledge that helped to improve the performance of my Center,” elaborated Dr. Gevorgyan, adding that she now plans to expand her Center’s services, even more, to address the increasing demand by the population served.



Tamara Gevorgyan, EIH beneficiary



“Narek” medical center in Talin



Lena Khachikyan, EIH beneficiary

5.2 Establishment of Pharmacy in Border Haghtanak Community

Having no pharmacies in the village of around 1,400 residents, Lena Khachikyan, a nurse and mother of three children from Haghtanak village, made the brave decision to become an entrepreneur in health.

“There were several reasons for my decision,” confesses Khachikyan. “First of all, my husband was a migrant worker, and we had to come up with a solution that would allow him to stay in his homeland, with his family. Second, the establishment of this pharmacy solved the gap of much-demanded services: people used to travel 10-12 kilometers to the nearest pharmacy, so the cost of traveling frequently exceeded the actual cost of medicine by several times. Now we have customers from many nearby villages and even from the town of Noyemberyan. Third, I was never employed in

my life, and was pursuing to realize my potential, while being able to look after my children.”

After completing all the necessary courses, Khachikyan successfully presented her Business and Quality Assurance plans, which were approved by the EIH Executive Committee. She received financial assistance from the EIH in the form of a low-interest business loan for purchasing equipment and pharmaceuticals.

“We were in the process of construction when we accidentally learned about the EIH program. Without this financial support, it would have taken us several years to complete the preparation and launch our pharmacy. What is more important is that my participation in the program gave me the knowledge needed for the overall management and organization of the work, as well as quality control,” says Khachikyan.



Lena Khachikyan's pharmacy in Haghtanak

The aim of EIH is to improve access to quality health services in rural communities of Armenia, Artsakh, and Javakhk through introduction of advanced technologies and innovative approaches supporting healthcare professionals to develop private health practices.

The AUA Turpanjian School of Public Health works actively to improve population health and health services in Armenia and the region through interdisciplinary education and development of public health professionals to be leaders in public health, health services research, and evaluation, health care delivery, and management.