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GEORGIA

SUCCESS STORY

Keeping Newborns Warm and Healthy

A father's simple actions ensure a healthy start for his newborn daughter



Merab Kintsurashvili was eager to use the “warm chain” technique to keep his newborn daughter protected from the cold after her delivery by Caesarian section.

“I cannot find appropriate words to describe the moment my daughter was placed on my chest. It was a feeling beyond happiness. I was overwhelmed with many emotions ... I will recommend [the warm chain process] to every man I know,” said Merab Kintsurashvili, a proud new father.

Telling Our Story
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Merab Kintsurashvili, a 36-year-old from western Georgia, and his wife, Teona Kikoliashvili, had waited 12 long years to have a baby. When the day finally arrived it was unforgettable, not only for the new parents, but also for the staff at the Regional Maternal and Children Treatment-Diagnostic Center. Merab was one of the first men in western Georgia to provide skin-to-skin contact for his newborn to help avoid hypothermia.

USAID has been working with maternity hospitals in Georgia to promote a technique called the “warm chain” to prevent hypothermia in newborns. Hypothermia is extremely dangerous and is a major cause of neurological disorders in Georgia. But, it is also easily prevented with simple procedures and without any special equipment. Newborns are immediately wrapped in a blanket, hat, and socks, and then placed on the mother’s bare chest for two hours to avoid heat loss. In the case of a Caesarian section, as with Teona, the father can participate in the process.

Despite the simplicity of warm chain, it is not systematically practiced in Georgia. Family members are traditionally kept outside the delivery room and men are on the sidelines during the pregnancy and delivery. But with USAID’s help, maternity hospitals are starting to change this. To raise awareness of the warm chain and other delivery practices, USAID supports trainings and programs that advocate for family-friendly delivery rooms and encourage the father’s involvement throughout the pregnancy and delivery.

Before delivery, health care providers told Merab that skin-to-skin contact with the father could prevent hypothermia and future infections. He quickly volunteered. Reflecting on his daughter’s birth, Merab said, “As a veterinarian, it was not uncomfortable with being present at the Caesarian section. But I think for other men it will be difficult and they need preparation.” Nevertheless, Merab plans to promote the benefits of warm chain to other expecting fathers. The experience not only ensured a healthy start for his daughter, but also enhanced family bonding. For Merab, his daughter, Tekla, “will always be daddy’s little girl.”