

OSAAB

Organization for the Support of Albania's Abandoned Babies
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Program Overview

Organizational History:

Organization for the Support of Albania's Abandoned Babies (OSAAB) is an U.S. and Albanian registered Non Governmental Organization (NGO) created in 1996 with a mission to provide care to abandoned babies in Albania, as well as provide health education training in Maternal and Newborn Health to medical staff and expectant and new mothers. The program works cooperatively and in conjunction with the Queen Geraldine University Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynecology in Tirana, Albania. Since the program began in 1996, over 500 abandoned babies have been provided care by OSAAB while they remain in the maternity hospital. OSAAB nor the maternity hospital are involved with the adoption of the babies but merely ensure that while the babies remain in the maternity hospital they receive all the love, care and medical attention required in a newborn infants life. On average babies remain in the maternity hospital for the first 2-3 months of their life prior to being moved to an orphanage to await adoption.

Since the program began in 1996, OSAAB and the Maternity Hospital have continuously focused their efforts on raising awareness within Albania of the "safe haven" existing within the hospital for women with unwanted pregnancies. These efforts have resulted in annual decreases in the number of babies abandoned in the streets, or in the hospital, where the identity of the birth mother is not known. There also have been noticeable decreases in the overall number of babies that are being abandoned each year. To ensure long-term sustainability, the OSAAB Board of Directors continues to focus their efforts on slowly taking a step back from involvement in day-to-day program operations and allow the hospital to provide oversight in daily program issues. The hospital director and staff have taken ownership of the program and play an active role in ensuring the babies receive quality health care, recruit volunteers, conduct fundraising events, organize media awareness campaigns, and initiate community outreach programs.

The OSAAB Board of Directors continues to monitor the program, as well as provide capacity building technical assistance to the hospital to ensure the same high quality of standards remain in place and the program is sustainable over the long-term.

Partnership History:

The Queen Geraldine University Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynecology (Maternity Hospital) is Albania's premier obstetrics and gynecological hospital; delivering over 6000 births a year. Through the Directorship of Dr. Halim Kosova, the maternity hospital has gained a reputation for providing quality health care for women and newborn infants in Albania. Additionally, Dr. Kosova is an active advocate against corruption in the health sector and strives to create a role model of a hospital offering quality health care regardless of the economic situation of a patient.

Through the successful cooperation between OSAAB and the maternity hospital, OSAAB has been able to identify and secure funding to construct and/or rehabilitate seven buildings and departments within the hospital complex, as well as receive in kind donations of medical supplies and equipment, with a combined value of over \$3millionUSD. This partnership has been exemplified by the local media and the community as a role model of an NGO and a government entity working cooperatively together to address social and health issues for women and children in Albania.

Maternal and Newborn Health: Patient and Nursing Health Education Program

In 2006, OSAAB and the Maternity Hospital entered into an agreement with The Women & Infants Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island, USA (WIHRI) to create a Maternal and Newborn Health Education Department within the Maternity Hospital.

The purpose of the program was to encourage the development of health education programs in the Maternity Hospital using a Train-the-Trainer model. This approach was successfully used in a prior partnership between WIHRI and the Maternity Hospital which resulted in the creation of the Women's Wellness Center within the hospital complex. The Women's Wellness Center continues to operate today and is maintained and self-sustained by the hospital. Additionally, it is envisioned that through the active involvement and education to parents about prenatal and newborn care, the risk of an infant being abandoned at birth, or institutionalized due to a disability, will be greatly reduced.

Patient Education:

Throughout 2006 and 2007, the partnership provided training to 25 trainers, four-times a year, in Patient Education. Trainers continue to conduct classes on a daily basis to new and expectant mothers in the hospital. The program provides access to information and free training classes to over 6000 new and expectant mothers a year who come to the Maternity Hospital to receive prenatal care and to deliver their babies.

Training of Trainer modules were provided in the following areas of Patient Education:

- Labor and Delivery Support
- Newborn and Maternal Care
- CPR/ Accident Prevention/ First Aid
- Breast Feeding
- Kangaroo Care
- Breast Cancer Awareness

Training modules were created and translated into Albanian for the possibility of replication at other hospitals throughout Albania.

Additionally, a 32 page booklet on newborn infant care was created and is now distributed to every mother before she leaves the maternity hospital. Yearly funding for printing of the booklets is provided by Raifessan Bank in Albania.

Nursing Education:

In 2008, the partnership expanded with the addition of nursing education programs that operate with the following objectives:

- Conduct continuing education programs to upgrade the skill base of nurses working in the maternity hospital.
- Provide training to new nurses as they begin clinical care
- Develop and implement competency check lists
- Train trainers to provide patient education and nursing education programs in the maternity hospital, as well as to oversee the program content of the patient and nursing education programs, and monitor the progress of the patient and nursing education programs.

In October 2008, 18 nurses were trained as trainers in the **Neo-Natal Resuscitation Program (NRP)**. The training provided vitally needed education to nurses in how to respond and provide emergency care to an infant born in cardiac or respiratory distress. These 18 nurses, in turn, trained over 180 nurses within the Maternity Hospital.

In January 2009, the program expanded to also include nurses from remote cities throughout Albania. Twenty-seven nurses were trained as trainers in the **STABLE Program** –(*Sugar, Temperature, Airway, Blood Pressure, Lab work and Emotional Support.*) This program provides the full range of interventions to medically stabilize an infant requiring transportation to a medical facility that provides support to high-risk infants. These twenty-seven nurses have in turn trained over 300 nurses throughout Albania in this vital technique which will save the lives of infants born in distress.

In May 2009, Nurse Trainers from within the hospital were trained as trainers in conducting courses in the **Annual CPR Re-Certification Program**.

In May 2010, a training-of trainers program will be conducted to the nurse trainers in “**High Risk Pregnancy**”. A portion of this training will address babies born with disabilities and will educate Nurse Trainers about various disabilities and how to encourage parents to take the baby home and not institutionalize them for life. Additionally, the training will create linkages and provide resources and networks available within each community to parents and medical staff regarding disabilities.

Through these on-going training programs, over 200 nurses in Albania are consistently being provided with updated training in nursing education. These training programs have made a tremendous impact and difference in the quality of health care that women and newborn infants now receive in Albania.

The program is truly a model of joint-cooperation and an equal partnership. All costs and responsibilities are equally distributed by the Partners (OSAAB, WIHRI, and the Maternity Hospital).