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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PRESS RELEASE

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USAID Recognizes Private Sector Efforts to Improve Reproductive Health in Azerbaijan

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN On June 8th, the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Azerbaijan Reproductive Health & Family Planning Project (RH/FP) hosted an award ceremony to recognize private sector efforts to improve reproductive health and family planning in Azerbaijan. Nearly 100 private business leaders, representatives from international and local health organizations, and government officials including **Karen Welch, Acting Country Coordinator for USAID; Elmira Alieva, Deputy Department of Organization of Medical Care Ministry of Health; and Faiza Alieva, National Coordinator for Reproductive Health** attended the event which was held at the Baku Jazz Center.

In Azerbaijan, limited access to modern contraception and lack of public information about the range of available methods contribute to low use of contraception. Only 14% of married couples use modern contraception in comparison to neighboring countries like Turkey (43%) and Russia (53%). By increasing the availability of modern contraceptives and providing couples with information they need to plan healthy pregnancies, countries have made significant progress in reducing maternal mortality and improving the health of women and children.

Speaking at the award ceremony, Karen Welch, USAID's Acting Country Coordinator described the critical role pharmaceutical companies and local pharmacies play in ensuring the population's access to quality contraceptives. "Everyone has the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children – this is an internationally recognized human right. But in order to do this, people need correct information, access to family planning services and the possibility to choose a method that best meets their needs. The private sector contributes to this effort by offering consumers a wide choice of quality contraceptives.

Two international pharmaceutical companies, **Bayer Schering Pharma, Gedeon Richter Ltd., the United Nations Population Fund, local NGO "Development and Empowerment for Youth"** were recognized for their active participation in the National Pomegranate Campaign and commitment to expanding contraceptive choice for couples in Azerbaijan. The Pomegranate Campaign was launched by the USAID-funded Azerbaijan RH/FP Project in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to increase public awareness about modern contraception as the safest and most reliable way to plan a healthy pregnancy and encourage pharmacies to offer consumers the widest possible choice of quality contraceptive products. 75 pharmacies from Baku/Absheron, Aghsu, Kurdemir, Goychay, Ismayilli, Shamakhi, and Sheki were also recognized for their active participation in this campaign.

For more information about this event and Azerbaijan RH/FP Project, please contact Sevinj Hasanova, Health Communication Officer, Azerbaijan RH/FP Project by e-mail at shasanova@acquireproject.org, by phone (012) 492 95 16, or 437 13 07, or visit www.acquireproject.com.

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Since Azerbaijan's independence, USAID has provided close to \$300 million of financial assistance and technical expertise, to bring positive and lasting change within the country's institutions and the lives of its people. From the American people, USAID programs cooperate with ministries, governmental agencies, non-government organizations, businesses, and communities to help improve laws, promote human and political rights, engage citizens, expand jobs, increase incomes, and improve the health and quality of life of Azerbaijan's people.