

MEETING NOTES №4/25-12

Meeting of the National Coordinating Committee to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the Republic of Tajikistan (the NCC)

Date: 25 May 2021
Location: Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Chaired by: Sattoriyon M.A., Deputy Prime Minister of RT, Chairperson of the NCC

Attended by: (19 NCC members)

Abdufatohzoda G. Head of the Social Development Department of the Executive Office of the President of Tajikistan

Abdusamadzod Z. Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection of Population of RT

Mahmadullozoda N.R. Deputy Minister of Labour, Migration and Employment of RT

Ghanisoda G.S. Deputy Minister of Education and Science of RT

Ibrohimzoda N. Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of RT

Husseinzoda M. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of RT

Safarzoda R. Deputy Minister of Finance of RT

Nasridinozoda R. Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of RT

Olimzoda F. Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Religious Affairs, Regulation of National Traditions, Celebrations and Rituals under the Government of Tajikistan (GoT)

Olsavszky V. Head of the World Health Organization Office in Tajikistan

IIIola Luma Acting Deputy Director of the USAID Mission to RT

Nazarova N. Financial Manager of the Project on HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis, UNDP in RT

Azizmadov M. Director of the Public Organization «Volontyor»

Khaidarova T. Director of the Public Organization «Tajikistan Network of Women Living with HIV»

Gulova F. Director of the Public Organization «Equal opportunities»

Naimov S. Director of the Public Organization - Association "Stop TB Partnership, Tajikistan»

Egamberdieva D. Director of Public Organization «Buzurg»,

Karimova G. Director of Public Organization «Zuhal»

Not attended by: (5 NCC members)

Mirzoyev N. Deputy Chairperson of the State Committee for National Security

Gafforzoda N. First Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Women and Family under GoT

Alizoda S. Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Television and Radio under GoT

Umarov M. Deputy Minister of Justice, Head of the Central Penal Correction Department of the Ministry of Justice of RT

Ahmadzoda D. Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on Youth and Sports under GoT

Invited attendees:

Rajabzoda A.	Director of the State Institution “Republican TB Centre” of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of RT
Nurov R.	Director of the State Institution “Republican AIDS Centre” of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of RT
Yuldasheva L.	Specialist of the Health Department of USAID in Tajikistan
Kasymova D.	Regional Director of the USAID Project on Elimination of Tuberculosis (TB) in Central Asia
Ismailova J.	Officer in the USAID Regional Project on Elimination of TB in Central Asia
Makhsumova Z.	Country Director of the Office of the International Centre for AIDS Care and Treatment Programmes (ICAP) in Tajikistan
Avghonov Z.	Executive Secretary of the NCC
Nasibov O.	Assistant to Executive Secretary of the NCC

AGENDA:

1. The current status of the USAID Project on Elimination of TB in RT.
2. The activities’ implementation of ICAP in RT.
3. Exclusion of the International Organization of Project HOPE from NCC in RT.

The Deputy Prime Minister opened the meeting of the NCC and went through the meeting agenda. She conveyed gratitude to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), WHO and other international organizations that continuously support the Government of RT in the field of healthcare. She stressed that Tajikistan along with other countries has been in a situation where the new coronavirus infection COVID-19 (C19) raises concerns in the world and affects the economy and society of all countries as well as makes people to change their behavior.

Furthermore, she emphasized that with the direct support of the Founder of Peace and National Unity, the Leader of the Nation, the President of RT, Emomali Rahmon, the efforts of the Government of RT and the relevant ministries and departments, and partners the epidemiological situation of C19 in the country has been stabilized and monitored, which is demonstrated by the absence of new cases of C19 in the country since the beginning of this year. The Deputy Prime Minister underscored the contribution of the GF, USAID, CDC in this respect which provided material assistance in the form of antiviral drugs and personal protective equipment and considerably aided the smooth activity of AIDS and TB centres as well as capacity-building of medical staff.

Regarding to the first meeting’s agenda, Kasymova D., Regional Director of the USAID Project on the Elimination of Tuberculosis in Central Asia, provided information on the progress of the USAID TB Elimination project in RT, its accomplishments and challenges during the project realization. She highlighted the USAID TB Elimination Project was currently being implemented in all five Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan, and around 40 per cent of the Project’s funds have been allocated for TB control activities in Tajikistan. The project aimed to reduce the

burden of TB in Central Asia via strengthening local and regional capacities for better detection and treatment of DR-TB. The Project objectives are to increase the number of detected TB and DR-TB cases, to improve the indicator of successful TB treatment and all forms of DR-TB, to create an enabling environment and to enhance the financial sustainability of TB programmes. The Project lasts for five years -- September 2019 to September 2024.

She also underlined the attained results of the Project so far: with the purpose of effective working with general population at community level, included vulnerable groups, as well as improving the quality of TB detection, treatment and prevention services, overall 214 volunteers and outreach workers were capacitated in the framework of the Project who actively began working towards early case detection and social support of TB patients in pilot areas. The trained volunteers and outreach workers visited TB-affected 9,944 households (47,721 population) to raise awareness of TB prevention and improve the detection of TB cases, that facilitated the timely detection and referral of patients with symptoms, similar to C19 and TB, to health facilities. At the same time, total 27,581 family members were screened for TB during the awareness-raising campaigns; of them, 2,500 patients with suspected TB were referred to health facilities for further medical examination as well as 152 patients were diagnosed with TB and 12 patients were confirmed with DR-TB.

To enhance adherence to treatment and to prevent discontinuation of treatment among DR-TB patients, the Project's volunteers supplied 200 DR-TB patients and 276 DS-TB patients with 952 foodstuffs, and 92 DR-TB patients and 276 DS-TB patients with 55 sewing machines, fabrics and 2,080 hygiene kits. In the framework of the Project the TB services were technically supported; an assessment was conducted to identify gender barriers, stigma and other social barriers for their removal and successful TB detection, treatment, and prevention in the country; various regulations and educational materials were developed in the area of TB prevention, as well training activities and round tables were held for specialists, for instance, total 537 medical and non-medical specialists were trained on provision of quality TB care, psycho-social support for patients, laboratory methods of TB analysis, community work on TB detection, treatment and prevention.

Discussion / Q&A

Sattoriyon M.: How do you assess the effectiveness of the Project's subcontractors and how has it affected the detection of TB patients?

Kasymova D.: At the beginning of the project the volunteers were capacitated on TB detection. The indicators demonstrated that those volunteers carried out their performance according to the set objectives and have positively contributed to detection of TB patients.

Sattoriyon M.: Has C19 affected the work of the Project and TB statistics?

Kasymova D.: Indeed, the pandemic has affected the progress of the Project. Although, majority of trainings were conducted online, the lack of physical monitoring field visits due to restrictions affected much the overall work of the Project and TB statistics.

Sattoriyon M.: Does the Project envisage the procurement of food for TB patients?

Kasymova D.: Regrettably, procurement of foodstuffs for TB patients is not included in the Project.

Next, on the second meeting's agenda, Makhsumova Z., Director of ICAP in RT briefed the participants on the implementation of ICAP activities in the country. She mentioned ICAP has been working since 2011 in RT. ICAP has been currently implementing the Project «Promotion of the National Programme to Fight HIV/AIDS» since October 1, 2019. The main goals of the Project are to contribute to improvement of the quality and implementation of HIV-related programmes in the

following areas: strengthening HIV prevention; diagnosis and treatment among adults; developing and implementing effective information systems for health programmes; and strengthening the capacity of AIDS centres. Besides, it was stressed that within the framework of the Project, ICAP provides methodological recommendations, advisory and financial support to health facilities in the pilot areas, including Dushanbe -- 17 healthcare institutions, including the city AIDS centre, the Republican Clinical Narcological Centre (RCNC), 15 city-based health facilities; 12 district AIDS centres in Districts of Republican Subordination and 16 district AIDS centres of Sughd oblast, including the Oblast AIDS Centre.

Moreover, in cooperation with RAC and RCNC the existing methodological recommendations, clinical protocols and guidelines were revisited, and medical staff were capacitated on HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment and opioid dependence in the country. Extensive work has been done to improve comprehensive information systems, including the electronic HIV Tracking System, electronic OST registry, and efforts are being made to find lost-to-follow-up HIV-positive patients. The developed information systems have been successfully deployed and broadly used in the RAC and RCNC. Practical assistance and advisory support are regularly provided through pilot sites as well (42 AIDS centres), including on-the-job training; mentorship and monitoring of adherence to quality standards of HIV treatment; home-based caregiving programme for PLHIV; procurement of test kits and equipment for HIV diagnosis and viral load testing; streamlining patient flow and improvement of health-care infrastructure.

In addition, Director of ICAP underlined that until now an anonymous online service was developed and applied to inform partners about necessity of HIV testing; HIV testing among prisoners was conducted in close cooperation with the Public Organization «Spin-Plus», information materials on HIV testing among migrants were developed and implemented; video rotation screens were installed at airports; and HIV testing among migrants was conducted through primary health-care services. Those interventions yielded in to increased number of PLHIV who know their status in Dushanbe, DRS and Soghd oblast from 4,996 (31 March 2020) to 5,328 (31 March 2021), as well as number of PLHIV who were receiving ART grew from 4,236 (31 March 2020) to 4,661 (31 March 2021) and number of PLHIV with [undetermined] viral load went up from 3,778 (31 March 2021) up to 4,401 (31 March 2020).

Discussion / Q&A

Abdufatohzoda G.: Does the Project coordinate its activities with other governmental and non-governmental organizations on co-infection?

Makhsuimova Z.: The Project established a good working collaboration with RAC, non-governmental organization “Medecins Sans Frontieres”, Project ETICA and other sectoral partners.

Abdufatohzoda G.: Does the Project envisage activities to reduce vertical transmission of HIV from mother to child?

Makhsuimova Z.: Unfortunately, due to limited financial resources, ICAP’s activities chiefly focused on the adult population.

Abdusamadzoda Z.: Have workshops/trainings been held for paediatricians and obstetricians-gynaecologists within the framework of the Project?

Makhsuimova Z.: Due to the fact that ICAP works with the adult population, workshops /trainings for paediatricians and obstetricians-gynaecologists were not supported in the framework of the Project.

Sattoriyon M. stressed the importance of implementing measures to PMTCT, as vertical transmission of HIV comprised 9% of transmission routes. She also called for attention to take appropriate measures in reducing the spread of HIV among labour migrants.

Concerning the third meeting's agenda, Avganov Z., Secretary of the NCC, noted that the International Organization of Project HOPE in Tajikistan had been elected as a member of the NCC since 2014 and it implemented the grants of GF in Tajikistan. The Project HOPE in Tajikistan sent a letter-request dated by 30 April 2021 to the Secretariat of the NCC informing that the Project had completed its activities and was officially closed out by the end of 2020. In this regard, the Project HOPE in Tajikistan requested to exclude its membership from the NCC on the basis of Article 14 of the NCC Provisions.

Olshavsky V. stated the GF announced call for application to request funding to fight C19 in the amount equivalent up to 30% from the existing grant. He stressed the importance of these funds in strengthening the prevention and control of AIDS and TB in the country.

Illola Luma remarked that USAID has been ready to assist in the development of a new application on the GF financial support to fight C19.

Having considered the meeting's agenda, the NCC took the following decisions:

1. Take note of the progress report of USAID Project to Eliminate TB in RT.
2. Take note of the ICAP report about the implemented activities of the ICAP in RT.
3. Exclude the International Organization of Project HOPE in Tajikistan from the NCC membership.

Sattoriyon M.A.

Deputy Prime Minister
The Republic of Tajikistan
Chairperson of the NCC