*(Unofficial translation)*

Minutes of Meetings No44

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

June 23, 2023 Dushanbe

Chaired by:

Amirzoda A.A. - Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection of the Population, Chief State Sanitary Doctor of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Participants: (19 NCC members):

K. Davlatzoda - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Republic of Tajikistan, Z.N. Abdulzoda - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, N. Ibrohimzoda - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, S.S. Kurboniyon - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Tajikistan, Z.K. Abdulmainzoda - Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, S. Alizoda - Deputy Chairman, Committee on Television and Radio under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, A. Vahobzoda - Deputy Chairman, Committee of Religion, Streamlining Traditions, Celebrations and Rites under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, L.Montiel - UNDP Resident Representative in the Republic of Tajikistan, A. Safarov - Office of the World Health Organization in the Republic of Tajikistan, Christopher Barrett - Health Office Director, USAID Mission in the Republic of Tajikistan, T. Haydarova – Director, non-government organization "Tajikstan Network of Women Living with HIV" ”, F. Gulova – Director, non-government organization “Equal Opportunities”, D. Egamberdieva – Director, non-government organization “Buzurg”.

Participants who were not present:

Rahimzoda Sh.K. - First Deputy Chairman, Committee for Youth and Sports under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, S. Naimov – Director, non-government organization “STOP TB Partnership Tajikistan", G. Karimova – Director, non-government organization "Zukhal".

Invited:

G.M. Muhsinzoda - First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, R. Boyballazoda - Deputy Head, the Main Department for the Execution of Criminal Sentences under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, L. Ainuddinov - Officer of the State Committee for National Security of the Republic of Tajikistan, F. Kosimov - Head of the Department of International and Regional Organizations, International Organizations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, F. Faizullozoda - Head of the Department for the Development of Social Sectors, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan, D. Fayzan - Portfolio Manager, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, N.Manik - Global Fund Sustainability and Cofinancing Specialist, Sh.Mufuji Machekera - Global Fund Public Health and M&E Specialist, S. Kholov - Project Specialist, USAID Mission in Tajikistan, Sona Orbelyan - Project Manager for the Prevention and Control of HIV / AIDS and Tuberculosis, UNDP in Tajikistan, N. Nazarova - Financial Manager, Project for the Prevention and Control of HIV / AIDS and Tuberculosis of the UNDP in Tajikistan, A. Safarov – Program Officer, World Health Organization in Tajikistan, A. Hamidova - UNAIDS Country Director, S. Bahodurov - Deputy Head, a.i. Head of the Labor Protection Department of the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Republic of Tajikistan, N. Jafarov - Head of Department of Sanitary -epidemiological safety, emergencies and medical care, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, R. Nurov - Director of the State Institution "Republican Center for the Protection of the Population from Tuberculosis" under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, S. Sattorov - Director of the State Institution “Republican Center for the Prevention and Control of AIDS” under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, A. Soliev - Deputy Director of the State Institution “Republican Center for the Prevention and Control of AIDS”, M. Asozoda - Head of the Medical Unit, Main Department for the Execution of Criminal Sentences under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan, Z. Avgonov - NCC Executive Secretary, O. Nasibov - Assistant to the Executive Secretary of the NCC.

Agenda:

1. Progress of implementation of the National AIDS Program in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025.

2. Progress of implementation of the National TB Control Program in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025.

3. Approval of the new composition of the Oversight Commission of the National Coordinating Committee to fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria in the Republic of Tajikistan.

Amirzoda A.A. - opened the meeting of the National Coordinating Committee and presented the agenda. He has noted that representatives of UNDP Tajikistan, principal recipient of GF grant proposed to include the fourth issue to the agenda to present the “Results of the grant making process of the GF grant to the Republic of Tajikistan to fight HIV/AIDS and TB for the period 2024-2026”.

All NCC members agreed on this proposal.

**On the first issue of the agenda**, the head of the medical department of the Main Department for the Execution of Criminal Sentences of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan Asozoda Munis presented the report on the progress of the National HIV/AIDS Program in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025 (National Program) in penitentiary facilities. In particular, he has noted that the penitentiary system of the Republic of Tajikistan consists of 19 institutions of various types, including 6 pre-trial detention centers, 9 correctional institutions of different regimes, 3 settlement colonies and the medical facility with its branch in the city of Khujand. He has added that a plan was developed for the implementation of the National Program in penitentiary facilities with financial support from the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and UNDP within the framework of the project “Improving the enabling environment and expanding prevention, treatment and care to reduce the burden of HIV and tuberculosis in the Republic of Tajikistan”. The project provided services to prisoners who inject drugs, HIV-infected prisoners, prisoners with TB infection and prisoners with TB/HIV co-infection. To identify HIV-positive people among prisoners, 12,385 prisoners were voluntarily tested in 2021 (of which 24 were identified as HIV-infected), 10,400 people were tested in 2022 (of which 38 were identified as HIV-infected), and in the first six months of 2023, 3400 people (of which 9 HIV-positive were identified). All identified HIV-positive persons were enrolled to dispensary registration. During the period of implementation of the National Program, trainings and seminars were held on a regular basis with the support of partners, information materials were distributed and individual counselling provided to prisoners, 44,400 brochures and booklets were distributed to prisoners. More than 700 people, including medical and non-medical workers of the system took part in the seminars and trainings. In total 8617 individual interviews conducted with prisoners. In the medical units of correctional facilities, integrated treatment of HIV-infected patients, patients with tuberculosis and people who inject drugs (PWID) is carried out according to the “one window” principle. The main achievement of the National Program is that over the past few years, the staff of the SEPION has managed to ensure adherence of HIV-infected people to antiretroviral therapy (ART) at the level of specified indicators and above. At the moment, out of 307 HIV-infected people, all without exception receive ART. He emphasized that in recent years, thanks to the implementation of the National Program in the penitentiary system, the death rate among HIV-infected people has significantly decreased from 20 people in 2014 to 9 in 2022, and in the last six months of 2023, no deaths have been registered among HIV infected patients.

**As well as on the first issue of the agenda**, Soliev Alijon, Deputy Director, Republican AIDS Center under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan presented report on progress of the National HIV/AIDS Program in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025" covering 2021-2022 and 1st quarter of 2023. He noted about key focuses, performance indicators, achievements and challenges in the implementation of the National Program. He added that the Government annually increases funding for the implementation of the National Program from the state budget. According to the forecasts, it is planned to allocate more than 45 million somoni from the state budget for the implementation of the third year of the National Program, which is 1.5 times more than initially planned amount. In addition, the country will receive about $10 million from the Global Fund for 2024-2025. Thus, the overall funding gap of the National Program may decrease from 32% at the time of its development to 10% by the end of the implementation of the National Program. State spending mostly focused on procurement of tests, infants formulas, medicines for the prevention and treatment of opportunistic infections, the safety of donated blood, social support for children with HIV, state social orders for NGOs, support for AIDS center staff, and others. At the end of 2022, about 15,000 PWID and 12,000 sex workers (SWs) were covered by the program, among whom more than 4 million sterile needles and syringes and condoms and about 40,000 information materials were distributed. More than 17,000 HIV tests have been carried out among PWID and about 15,000 among SWs. The prevalence of HIV among PWID is 8.9% that decreased by almost 2 times compared to 2010 and among SWs it was 2.9% in 2022, which is 9% less than in 2018. The level of HIV prevalence among people in prisons decreased significantly and is 3.1%. In order to expand access to HIV testing, the number of institutions providing testing services is increasing annually in the country. There are currently 448 HIV testing sites in the country based on state, public and private laboratories. There are newest ELISA laboratories providing services in 32 AIDS centers and 9 other state laboratories. 100 private laboratories and 9 NGOs provide HIV testing services. Thanks to expanding access to testing, the coverage of the population with HIV testing is increasing every year. While in 2018 in total 781,000 people were tested for HIV, it reached 909,000 in 2021 and 919,000 in 2022. However, despite the increase in the number of people tested for HIV in the country, the level of HIV detection among tested remains dynamically low and does not exceed 0.2%. Thus, according to recent data, the HIV epidemic in Tajikistan remains approximately at the same rate. During the implementation of the National Program in the country, among newly identified cases, treatment coverage was more than 95%, which corresponds to the goals of the program. In recent years, some progress in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV has been made. Procurement and provision of HIV tests for pregnant women is fully funded from the state budget. Hence, while in 2017 the amount of 880,000 somoni were allocated from the budget, in 2020 it was increased to about 4 million somoni, and in 2023 more than 4.5 million somoni. As of March 31, 2023, only 2,303 pregnant women with HIV infection were registered in the country, of which 93.5% were covered by prevention activities.

He has highlighted that in 5 months of 2023, 74 out of 106 sub-clauses of the National Program were completed, which reached 69.8%, 11 sub-items are in the process of implementation and 21 sub-clauses are going to be implemented by the end of 2023.

Muhsinzoda G.M. proposed to strengthen the activities on digitalization of the HIV system in the country. He noted that since 2011, HIV services have been using an electronic HIV case tracking system, which is installed in all 67 AIDS centers, as well as in Dushanbe city health centers. Data are entered into the system in real time and are immediately sent to the RCAIDS. All metrics and indicators disaggregated by gender, age, region, mode of transmission and others can be obtained in real time from this system. All responsible specialists are trained, all computers have an appropriate double protection system.

**On the second issue of the agenda**, the director of the Republican TB Control Center under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan (RTBC) Nurov R. presented the report on the implementation of the National TB Control Program in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025”. He mentioned about main achievements in the implementation of the National Program, including the facts that recent years the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) has decreased from 60.6 to 39.7 per 100,000 populations. There is the decrease of the mortality rate from TB over the past 5 years in the country (in 2018, 3.1 people per 100,000 population, in 2022, 1 person per 100,000 population). Innovative approaches of TB diagnostics are being actively introduced, in particular, the use of express tests, such as GXpert ultra, GXpert using XDR cartridges. State funding for the procurement of diagnostic consumables and first-line drugs in the TB service is being increased, at the expense of the state budget; the country has begun to procure second-line anti-TB drugs for the treatment of patients with mono-resistant and multi-resistant forms of TB, as well as for drug-resistant forms of tuberculosis (DR-TB). Guidelines for diagnosis and treatment of latent TB was approved, drugs for the treatment of latent TB infection were procured from the state budget, and training was conducted in pilot cities and regions of the country. With support of NGOs, the number of tested conducted among TB contacts has increased, and a high percentage of treatment coverage of TB and DR-TB patients detected has been achieved - up to 98% among drug-susceptible TB and 93% among DR-TB.

He has highlighted the challenges in the successful implementation of the National Program, including the reduction in the detection of TB and DR-TB due to COVID-19, insufficient achievement of screening and diagnosis coverage of contacts and persons with suspected TB, insufficient awareness of the population, in particular young people, women in separate regions of the country, detection of symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of TB, lack of qualified personnel, high levels of stigma and discrimination against TB patients and their relatives, insufficient funding for the purchase of reagents and consumables for biochemical testing during TB screening and DR-TB patients during treatment, insufficient funding in most city and district TB centers to provide nutritional support and procure drugs for management of adverse events from anti-TB drugs.

Muhsinzoda G.M. – There are problems associated with the wider involvement of primary health care facilities (PHC) in TB detection. It is necessary to identify problems why PHC institutions are not fulfilling their services in implementing the National TB Program. Another question - are the microscopic laboratories operating at the primary level provided with the necessary tools for TB diagnosis? What work is being done by the RTBC to improve the services of PHC institutions in the implementation of the National Program?

Nurov R. - During the month of June 2023, RTBC staff made visits to 33 regions of the country, meetings were held with the head doctors of PHC facilities. During the visits, it turned out that many PHC institutions are involved in the implementation of only one indicator of the National Program - the diagnosis of tuberculosis, the implementation of the other three indicators of the Program are not covered by PHC facilities. There were also problems with the provision of microscopy reagents. Since January 2023, reagents have not been provided, because they were not procured by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan. However, reagents were procured with the assistance of development partners. The reagents have now been submitted for certification and a response is expected in the coming days. RTBC will continue to strengthen cooperation with PHC facilities in order to facilitate the implementation of the activities assigned to them by the National Program.

Davran Fayzan - patients are still diagnosed by the clinical method. Propose to strengthen cooperation with other healthcare structures to increase the detection of new TB cases.

**On the third issue of the agenda** “Approval of the new composition of the Oversight Commission of the National Coordinating Committee to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the Republic of Tajikistan” the chairman has noted that, in accordance with paragraph 3 of the Oversight Plan, approved by the decision of the NCC on July 10, 2012 the members of the Oversight Commission are elected for three year term. He added that the composition of the current Oversight Commission under the NCC was approved in 2020 and during this time the people left their positions. He emphasized that in accordance with paragraph 6, Regulations of the National Coordinating Committee, in accordance with the goals and objectives, the NCC has the right among the members of the NCC, employees of state institutions and representatives of organizations and institutions that are not members of the NCC, to create commissions and working groups. The management of commissions and working groups are entrusted to one of the members of the NCC.

He proposed to the members of the NCC to approve the Oversight Commission under the NCC in the following composition:

1) Amirzoda Abdukholik Amir - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan, Chairman of the Supervision Commission;

Members of the Commission:

2) Jafarov Navruz Junaydulloevich. - Head of the Department of Sanitary and Epidemiological Safety, Emergencies and Emergency Medical Assistance of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan;

3) Faizullozoda Farrukh Voris - Head of the department for the development of social sectors, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan;

4) Saidova Nargis Asrorkhonovna – Director, NGO "Gender and Development";

5) Makhmudova Mavluda - Regional Advisor, STOP TB Partnership.

The new composition was approved by all NCC members.

**On the fourth issue of the agenda**, Sona Orbelyan presented an overview of the new Global Fund for 2024-2026 “Ending the HIV and TB epidemic through evidence-based interventions and innovative approaches focusing on key and vulnerable groups in the Republic of Tajikistan”, including the project goal, budget, project modules and target populations that will be covered by the project services. The total budget of the project is 25,964,147 USD (HIV component - 15,437,432 USD, TB component - 10,526,715 USD). In addition, there is an unsecured additional funding under Prioritized Above Allocation Request (PAAR) amounting of $23,523,410. Key target groups are: key populations - PWID, SW, MSM, prisoners, migrants, people living with HIV and their partners, TB patients and people who have contacted TB patients. She added that antiretroviral therapy will be further expanded to cover the growing number of PLHIV. To ensure treatment adherence, viral load and CD4 testing will be provided, peer consultants supported, and food packages provided to PLHIV who will be hospitalized with opportunistic diseases. She emphasized that the innovations of the new grant for 2024-2026 are procurement of tests to identify resistance of PLHIV to dolutegravir. If resistance is found, patients will be offered an alternative treatment regimen. Increasing TB detection will also be one of the priority areas of the grant. She also highlighted that within the framework of the above-mentioned Global Fund grant, a Project Implementation Unit will be established under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan. Currently, the process started on defining the scope of work and TOR for the PIU .

Following the discussion of the agenda issues, the meeting of the National Coordinating Committee made following decisions:

1. Take into consideration the reports presented by the Main Department for the Execution of Criminal Sentences under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republican AIDS Center under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan on “Progress of the implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Programme in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021- 2025".
2. Take into consideration the report presented by the Republican TB Control Center under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan on “Progress of implementation of the National TB Control Program in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025”.

2.1. Republican TB Control Center to:

- intensify work to increase the new TB cases detection rate;

- Together with the relevant structures, take the necessary measures to widely involve PHC facilities in the implementation of the National TB Control Program in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025.

1. Approve the composition of the Oversight Commission of the National Coordinating Committee for the fight HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria in the Republic of Tajikistan (composition is attached).
2. Take into consideration the presentation of the United Nations Development Program in Tajikistan on the grant making results for GF grant on HIV/AIDS and TB for the period 2024-2026 in the Republic of Tajikistan”.

4.1. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, together with the Global Fund and the United Nations Development Program in Tajikistan, will determine the scope of work/terms of reference that will be assigned to the Project Implementation Unit being created.

Vice Prime-Minister of Tajikistan,

Chair of the NCC

M.A. Sattoriyon

Annex 1

Approved

at the meeting of the National

coordinating committee to fight

AIDS, TB and malaria

in Republic of Tajikistan

protocol dated 23.06.2023, No. 44

Composition

Of the Oversight Commission under the National Coordinating Committee to

fight AIDS, TB and Malaria in the Republic of Tajikistan

1) Amirzoda Abdukholik Amir - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan, Chairman of the Supervision Commission;

Members of the Commission:

2) Jafarov Navruz Junaydulloevich. - Head of the Department of Sanitary and Epidemiological Safety, Emergencies and Emergency Medical Assistance, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan;

3) Faizullozoda Farrukh Voris - Head of the department for the development of social sectors, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan;

4) Saidova Nargis Asrorkhonovna – Director, NGO "Gender and Development";

5) Makhmudova Mavluda - Regional Advisor, STOP TB Partnership.

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