



Strengthening Leadership of National AIDS Programs



Meeting of CAPACITY Seconded Specialist and Republican AIDS Center Director in Tajikistan (Photo: CAPACITY/TJ Office)

Staff secondment strengthens national AIDS coordinating mechanisms in Central Asia

“Seconded specialists brought significant improvement to the work of the national AIDS coordinating mechanism in Tajikistan; we feel their assistance and support every day.”

**– Dr. Ruziev, Director
Republican AIDS Center in
Dushanbe, Tajikistan**

Rapidly unfolding HIV epidemics in Central Asia call for expanded responses from all sectors of society. To meet this challenge, countries have established national AIDS coordination mechanisms to ensure coordinated leadership for HIV/AIDS control efforts across public institutions, civil society, and the private sector. Since HIV is a relatively new phenomenon in Central Asia, effective management of national AIDS programs is hampered by lack of specialists with relevant experience and expertise. In fact, the initial assessment conducted by the USAID-funded CAPACITY Project in 2005 revealed a strong need for human resource capacity development to support national leadership, specifically in such technical areas as communications, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and cooperation with NGOs.

To address this problem, CAPACITY developed a Secondment Plan together with the Republican AIDS Centers in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan and the AIDS Coordination Unit in Kyrgyzstan. This plan proposed placement of communications specialists, M&E experts, and NGO/civil society liaisons within national AIDS programs in order to provide technical assistance to support improvement of coordination of the national response to the epidemics. To ensure transparency of the secondment, all steps of the process, including selection of the specialists, were finalized and implemented with close involvement of national stakeholders in each country. According to the Secondment Plan, selected specialists attended a series of orientation trainings and received office space, equipment and means of communication. In addition, CAPACITY provided technical support to the seconded staff through the Project regional coordinators of the similar professional profiles.

In the first year the seconded specialists offered technical assistance that has significantly improved the management of national AIDS programs. The M&E specialists have contributed to strengthening the collection and analysis of national HIV data. The Communication specialists developed information exchange tools and coordination mechanisms, including websites, monthly bulletins and databases for national AIDS programs and the National Communication Strategies are being finalized. The NGO liaisons have facilitated better involvement of civil society in the development of national HIV policies and strategic plans. NGO liaisons also have led civil society mobilization to scale up national responses to the epidemics. This strategy is now being replicated by other partners who are seconding additional specialists to the national program coordinating mechanisms in each country.

