



Improving Services for People with Dual HIV and TB Infection



Salima Sultanova, physician of Dushanbe-city TB Center is conducting voluntary counseling session on HIV to a seasonal migrant laborer. (Photo: CAPACITY/TJ Office)

Interaction of the HIV and TB Services works well in improving access of the patients with dual infections to essential services

“Our TWG looks forward to the future optimistically. While there are early successes of implementation of the TB/HIV interaction model in Dushanbe, there is a strong need to move forward, spreading this best practice to other regions of Tajikistan”

- Technical Working Group Members

Saydaliev Saydullo and Dodarbekov Mansur provide medical aid to people in Tajikistan for many years. Dr. Saydaliev leads the TB services and Dr. Dodarbekov is the Chief of the Epidemiology Department of the Republican AIDS Center. Both have faced the challenges of providing quality medical services to people with dual HIV and TB infections. As in the other countries of the region HIV and TB often accompany each other, and in the absence of proper clinical management, they result in high mortality.

The referrals for HIV and TB patients between the two services, diagnostic testing for opportunistic infections, educating TB patients about HIV prevention and HIV patients about TB prevention, and appropriate clinical management of HIV/TB cases were lacking since the beginning of HIV epidemic. Mechanisms were needed to promote collaboration between services that would result in improved clinical management and health outcomes of HIV/TB patients.

With technical support from the CAPACITY Project, the Ministry of Health (MoH) initiated in August 2005 a discussion, during which a technical working group (TWG) on HIV/TB was established. Drs. Saydaliev and Dodarbekov co-chaired the TWG and represented TB and AIDS services respectively. They led a participatory process to develop critical technical guidelines and governmental orders which served as the foundation for establishing the formal and practical interaction of the two services. With active management and participation, they successfully launched a model on TB/HIV treatment in Dushanbe. Today all specialists in both services in Dushanbe are trained on the issues of their interaction and management of patients with dual infections.

Early in the implementation, there was a noticeable lack of follow-up for patients referred from the TB to AIDS services for HIV testing. Regular monitoring revealed that the reason was the long distance between the service sites and stigma felt by the patients. The service providers have worked out a way to overcome stigma through proper education and more TB patients were provided with VCT for HIV that was arranged directly at the TB facilities. This initiative has also increased the number of patients who receive a full package of services, which includes testing for active TB and TB prevention education for patients who are HIV-infected, testing for HIV infection and HIV prevention education for patients with TB, and cotrimoxazole prophylactic treatment for patients with both TB and HIV. Currently, the TWG is helping to better clarify the role of specialists in patient management.

Drs. Saydaliev and Dodarbekov are working on establishing a sustainable approach to TB/HIV patient management through training of trainers. Along with the monitoring team, they supervise the implementation of the new approach and provide technical assistance to specialists of both services. This success is the result of the professional work of the national experts and members of TWG on TB/HIV, the support and supervision of the MoH, and technical support from the CAPACITY Project.

