

**'Fast-track TB/HIV responses for key populations in EECA cities' project
Newsletter №6**

April-June, 2018

Project brief



'Fast-track TB/HIV responses for key populations in EECA cities' project was initiated by Alliance for Public Health (Ukraine) with AFEW International (The Netherlands), Ilicit and Stop TB Partnership (both Switzerland) under technical guidance of UNAIDS Eastern Europe and Central Asia office with funding of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to support city responses to HIV and TB in key populations in the cities of EECA.

The project is implemented throughout 2017-2019 and plans to develop efficient and sustainable city models of HIV/TB responses that would allow reducing AIDS and TB mortalities in the project cities as well as increasing the allocation of city funding to HIV/TB interventions for key populations. Five cities are participating in the project: Almaty (Kazakhstan), Balti (Moldova), Odesa (Ukraine), Sofia (Bulgaria) and Tbilisi (Georgia).

This newsletter summarizes project main activities and achievements during April-June 2018 in accordance with 4 project objectives:

1. Development and implementation of a model for key populations for the '90-90-90' targets of the HIV and TB response in selected cities of the EECA region
2. Establishing effective partnerships between municipalities and NGOs/CSOs in selected EECA cities
3. Ensuring sustainable allocations of municipal funding for key population programs in project cities
4. To increase knowledge management and popularize city responses on HIV and TB in cities of the EECA region and globally

Objective 1. Development and implementation of a model for key populations for the '90-90-90' targets of the HIV and TB response in selected cities of the EECA region

Odesa voted for the Municipal program on HIV/AIDS and TB



On June 06th, Odesa City Council voted for the Municipal program on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis in Odesa 'Fast-Track CITies' for 2018-2020 allocating almost UAH 65 984 600 (USD 2 500 000) from the Municipal budget for combating HIV/TB.

In 2017 within 'Fast-track TB/HIV responses for key populations in EECA cities' project' Odesa conducted a situation assessment aiming at identifying particular HIV/TB key populations needs, services, data gaps, barriers to access and sustainability of services resourcing. As the result, the program was developed within Fast-Track CITies project with the involvement of key stakeholders and partners in Odesa and international support from the Stop TB Partnership and UNAIDS.

Considering the significant decrease in funding from international donors, including The Global Fund to support HIV and TB responses the Odesa Municipal program includes the transition from the donor-funding to the domestic funding of HIV/TB programs including from Municipal budget.

The overall budget of the Municipal program is 395 390 400 UAH (about 15 000 000 USD) with 65 984 600 UAH (about 2 500 000 USD) from the Municipal budget. The program aims at reaching UNAIDS and Stop TB 90-90-90. The harm reduction services will be provided to 33 300 Key populations out of estimated 37 000 in the city (including 20 250 PWID, 5 310 CSW, 7 740 MSM) in 2020. 11 000 000 UAH will be allocated from the Municipal budget on reaching KPs within 2018-2020 which is 15% from the overall financing for reaching 90 % of KPs. It is planned to reach 13 808 people living with HIV with antiretroviral treatment and 1 100 people with anti-tuberculosis treatment annually.

The core costs added by the city are: 18 % of municipal funding is for HIV testing, 17 % is for harm reduction for KPs, 7 % is for Mobile TB clinic to expand TB screening in the city, 5 % is for implementing Directly observed treatment for tuberculosis in the outpatient stage and 4 % is for X-ray complex.

Substantial advocacy efforts by project partnership led to voting for the program by 54 out of 62 Members of Odesa City Council, which is the bright example of city leadership that is taking strong on challenging health issues in the city.

Training on infection control held in Balti



On 29th-31st of May, a training on 'Infection control of TB/HIV/Hepatitis in medical institutions of Moldova' was conducted in Balti by experts from the NGO 'Infection Control in Ukraine'.

27 specialists and activists participated in the training: medical staff working in the epidemiologic area in Balti municipality and representatives of non-governmental organizations working in the field of HIV/TB prevention.

The event aimed at training specialists on how to implement, monitor and evaluate measures of infectious tuberculosis control, HIV and parenteral hepatitis. The training provided an opportunity to discuss the joint actions in identifying and timely including HIV and TB cases into the treatment, defining joint algorithms in the management of co-infections

As the result of the training, a joint action plan was developed on improvement of infection control in Balti medical institutions.

'Choose life – get tested for HIV!' – Almaty is closing HIV cascade gap



'Choose life – get tested for HIV!' - under this slogan, on April 2nd, an operational research on 'Low

threshold testing and treatment of HIV for PWID in Almaty' was launched in Almaty. Within the research, a team of outreach workers conduct assisted testing for PWID and their sexual partners by express saliva tests, then link and register each HIV+ identified client to the AIDS Center Dispensary and assist them to start ARV therapy on time. Within the framework of the operational research, it is planned to test 2000 PWID and their partners and to assist in starting ARV therapy for 500 clients with HIV.

During April-June 2018:

- 544 people were tested for HIV, including 402 PWID and 142 their sexual partners
- 13 people had HIV+ express test result
- 7 people were registered on AIDS Center Dispensary
- 4 people started ARV therapy

Special attention in the operational research is given to HIV-positive clients, who were registered on AIDS Centre before, but for different reasons did not start ARV therapy and lost contact with the Center. For the reporting period, the outreach workers linked such 3 clients to ARV therapy.

The model is revolutionary for Almaty as it involves outreach workers for outreach testing using saliva tests for the first time.

Iceland's drug use response among youth is planned to be implemented in Odesa



On May 17th, the Icelandic model of preventing the use of psychoactive substances among young people called 'Planet Youth' was presented to the Odesa City Hall. The meeting was participated by representatives from Odesa Departments of Health, Education and Science, Labor and Social Policy, Internal Policy, the Center for Social Services, Police, Probation Service, other medical and preventive institutions and public organizations, as well as Members of the Odesa City Council.

The Icelandic model demonstrates good results in the prevention of smoking, alcohol and drug use among children and youth. During the twenty years of the program implementation in Iceland, drug use among young people has decreased from 17% to 7%, smoking - from 23% to 3%, alcohol consumption - from 42% to 5%.

The Icelandic model is not based on changing the opinion of a single child, but changing the conditions in which he/she is, filling it with interesting activities. A regular monitoring of inquiries and interests of adolescents in schools is planned in Odesa. This will allow to see what is needed, and to introduce in the given territory the leisure activities which are necessary for children. The results of the research will be immediately announced to teachers and parents. It is also proposed to create a single electronic resource

with information about free hobby groups, clubs, sport sections for the convenience of finding information about it.

The proposed measures will reduce the risks of dangerous behavior for children, including with drug use, solve the problem of 'street education' and give teenagers the opportunity to spend time depending on their interests. The implementation of this model is included in the Municipal program on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis for 2018-2020.

Objective 2. Establishing effective partnerships between municipalities and NGOs/CSOs in selected EECA cities

Meeting with Tbilisi Night Mayor



On June 12th Tanadgoma Executive Director Nino Tsereteli met with Mr. Sergi Gvarjaladze, who was recently appointed as the head of night economic development of Tbilisi, so called 'Night Mayor' of Tbilisi.

The aim of the meeting was to provide Mr. Gvarjaladze with the information and updates on Fast Track Cities project, to inform him on importance of fighting HIV/TB on city level and benefits of the Cities project for Tbilisi in overall. During the meeting Ms. Tsereteli and "Night mayor" also discussed the possibility of his attendance and making presentation at City Health Conference in September 2018. Mr. Gvarjaladze also promised to give the information on Cities project, Paris declaration and City Health Conference to Tbilisi Mayor Mr. Kaladze.

Stop TB Partnership advocacy visit to Almaty Municipality



On April 25th, AIDS Foundation East-West in Kazakhstan organized the advocacy visit of the Deputy Executive Director of the STOP TB Partnership (Switzerland) Sahu Suvanand to the Deputy Mayor of Almaty Murat Daribayev. The high-level meeting was also attended by the Deputy Head of the Almaty Health Department, the Director of the National Research Center for Phthisiopulmonology, and the Director of the Inter-district TB Dispensary in Almaty.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the strategy of cooperation of Almaty Municipality with STOP TB Partnership within the framework of Zero TB declaration. On April 26-27, AIDS Foundation East-West in Kazakhstan also took part in an international conference on tuberculosis dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the National Research Center for Phthisiopulmonology and gave a presentation on the activities carried out within the framework of Fast-Track Cities project.

As the result of high-level visit and meeting with the Deputy Mayor, Almaty plans to join Zero TB Cities in 2018.

Objective 3. Ensuring sustainable allocations of municipal funding for key population programs in project cities

Seminar on innovative models for financing health programs conducted in Sofia



On June 6th-7th, a seminar for the development of innovative models for financing of health programs at the municipal level was held in Sofia. The seminar was attended by 15 professionals from 5 NGOs, 3 directorates of the Sofia Municipal Administration, the Ministry of Health and 'Fipra'.

This seminar brought together representatives from Sofia Municipality, the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organizations to think in terms of possible financial resources and solutions for continuing effective HIV prevention among key populations in Sofia. Their joint work took place at a time when a working group for the preparation of a municipal HIV prevention program is expected. The shaping of ideas, as well as their dressing in financial parameters from the key figures in the city, was very timely. Unlike previous similar events, when the idea of a coordinated response to HIV at the municipal level was discussed more abstractly, during this event, under the clever guidance of consultant Jacob Huber from licit, Switzerland, the participants managed to get into specific parameters and outline the future roles of funding and implementing institutions.

In addition to working on an analysis of the current city situation and planning, in another part of the two-day program the participants were acquainted with Bern's funding and social contracting practices as well as with models of innovative sources of funding that the non-governmental sector handles.

Objective 4. To increase knowledge management and popularize city responses on HIV and TB in cities of the EECA region and globally

Sharing best practices of NGO/Municipality cooperation - Almaty-Tbilisi visit



On 24th-27th of April, Fast Track Cities implementing partners from Almaty visited their peers from Tbilisi. The city was visited by a six-member delegation from Almaty, which included KPs and NGO organizations. The agenda of the visit included meetings with the local coordinating NGO 'Tanadgoma', the Municipal Center for Diseases Surveillance and Control and Infectious Diseases, AIDS & Clinical Immunology Research Center but mostly was concentrated on the non-governmental and community organizations.

The visit was designed to give opportunities to participants to reflect and review what they had learnt from the visit and what could have been done better to ensure risk populations universal access to diverse HIV and TB preventive, medical and care services. The objective of the visit was to understand how local community and NGO organizations managed to scale up such a large coverage with services for key populations, ensuring broad and diverse access to prevention and care. Main achievement of community organizations in Tbilisi is that they managed to provide medical services (HIV, HCV, HBV and syphilis screening, dental services, liver fibroscan procedure) on the basis of their organizations' offices, this was the new experience for delegates, as community organizations in Almaty has no experience to provide such kind of medical services so far.

Both countries encountered the great dependence on international funding. In aim to address this problem, Georgia has developed a transition plan in response to gradual reductions of the Global Fund funding over the years. The goal of the Georgian Transition Plan is to ensure a smooth transitioning to full domestic funding of the HIV and TB programs by 2022 without compromising services. However, the plan does not specify which services the government is taking over or when. In this transition period, city's commitments will ensure more equitable, inclusive, prosperous and sustainable future for risk populations. Delegates shared some experience how city-funded HIV/TB services work in Almaty and how the municipalities have been involved in the implementation of the HIV prevention programs during the transition period of the Global Fund.

Fast Track CITIes at EECAAC 2018



On 18th -20th of April, Moscow hosted the largest Eastern Europe and Central Asia Conference on HIV/AIDS (EECAAC 2018), which gathered about 3 000 delegates from 63 countries. Among them were the partners of the 'Fast-track TB/HIV responses for key populations in EECA cities' regional project – the Association 'Youth for the Right to Live' Balti (Moldova), AFEW International (the Netherlands) and The Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (Estonia).

The main objective of the Conference was to intensifying efforts to end the HIV epidemic by 2030 and the need for a significant increase in efforts to ensure universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programs. During the Conference many unique topics were discussed, including: innovative approaches to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV and opportunistic and associated infections; strengthening the links between science and practice; the development of regional health systems; a new generation without HIV/AIDS; sports fighting HIV/AIDS; migration and HIV, the role of cooperation, interaction and coordination in the fight against HIV/AIDS; the economic aspects fighting HIV.

A separate session on the 'Fast-track TB/HIV responses for key populations in EECA cities' regional project was held during the Conference. The achievements of the cities participating in the project, the effectiveness of the project from the point of view of the regional network, as well as from the perspective of regional NGOs involved were presented during the session.

Harm Reduction 2.0



Nowadays, in countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Moldova, most drug users use so-called 'new' drugs, buying them through 'darknet' – 'deep', 'shadow' or 'dark' Internet. Here are just a few facts on this - only one Russian forum on the sale of psychoactive substances is visited by more than 500 000 people daily. The average number of subscribers of any Telegram channel on the subject of drugs is more than 100 000 people, and there are several such channels. Today we can say that access to psychoactive substances in our region has become almost unlimited, and as a result we have a large number of new users of 'new' drugs, which simply cannot be covered by traditional harm reduction and prevention programs, because by using traditional method such as outreach, we simply cannot reach this target group. In early June 2018, DUNews, together with the Alliance for Public Health conducted research in Kyiv, with the goal to develop an algorithm, that allows the introduction of traditional methods of prevention and harm reduction in an such uncharacteristic environment, as 'darknet'. More about this in our new film 'Harm Reduction 2.0' which is available at <https://bit.ly/2nSm4iD>.

2nd Regional Consultation on HIV among MSM and Trans People in Eastern Europe and Central Asia



On May 31st-June 1st, focal points from Almaty, Balti and Odesa jointly with ECOM's Project Coordinator Erika Tserkasina took part in the Second Regional Consultation on HIV among MSM and Trans People in Eastern Europe and Central Asia 'New Challenges and Approaches in the Response to the HIV epidemic among MSM and Trans People in Eastern Europe and Central Asia' conducted in Tbilisi. More than 120 experts from 17 countries participated in the regional Consultation.

Participation in the 2nd Regional Consultation served as a communication platform for the focal points from the three cities where the experiences obtained in the varying contexts could finally be shared and discussed. In addition, this involvement allowed the focal points to develop a deeper understanding of

ECOM's approach and, more generally, of the work for MSM and trans people carried out at the level of EECA region.

Knowledge and skills obtained at the event have been passed on to the MSM communities in the cities for improving their capacity to interact and build a productive and successful dialogue with municipality in order to implement PrEP for MSM and to fund activities for MSM from the municipal budget.