

COMPONENT 1

Sub-component 1.1. Regional HIV/AIDS Coordination and Policy Development

Meeting of Interim Working Group under the Healthcare Council of EurAsEC Integration Committee on finalization of concept documents regarding institutionalization of Regional AIDS Fund (RAF) in Central Asia and development of Regional HIV counteraction strategy in Central Asia was held in Bishkek on February 10-11.

The working group was created as a result of the 5th meeting of Healthcare Council under the EurAsEC Integration Committee which took place in Dushanbe in November 2008. It was decided to delegate one expert as a representative from each three Central Asian states, and from Russia and Republic of Belarus as well.

During two days the working group members had been working on finalization of concept documents regarding institutionalization of Regional AIDS Fund in Central Asia: the drafts of concept, bylaws and agreement on establishing a Central Asian Regional AIDS Fund in framework of Eurasian Economic Community. All developed documents will be represented for approval of the Healthcare Council of EurAsEC Integration Committee during its next meeting which will be held in Moscow on June 2009.

On February 11, the working group members and RPMU staff had a meeting with the Joint World Bank and DFID mission in Bishkek. The main issues of the meeting were a restructuring of Central Asian AIDS Control Project and Regional AIDS Fund as its component. The Project Executive Director, Prof. Tilek Meimanaliev, Component 1 Coordinator, Ms. Chinara Seitatieva and RAF Coordinator, Mr. Zakir Kadyrov explored these issues to the mission representatives and after they were discussed.

The meeting outcomes were considered on the meeting between the Joint World Bank and DFID mission and Vice General-Secretary of EurAsEC, Mr. Musataev M. on February 12. The Project Executive Director, Prof. Tilek Meimanaliev attended this meeting as well.

Regular meetings of the technical working group on revision and addition of HIV and AIDS Law of Republic of Uzbekistan were held in February. The working group consists of 5 deputies from Olyi Majlis legislation chamber of the Republic of Uzbekistan, representatives of healthcare and science-research institutions, UNODC and CAAP. As a result, the HIV and AIDS law was analyzed, justification concept for making amendments into existing HIV and AIDS laws was developed. Besides, the working group developed a draft edition of new Law on HIV-infection, recommendations and additions were represented.

Meeting on prognostication of HIV epidemic amongst vulnerable groups was held in the Uzbekistan Republican AIDS Center on February 24, 2009. Representatives of different international organizations were involved into the meeting (CAAP, GFATM).

Conferences, workshops, working meetings, discussions

A regional round table meeting on coordination of national and international partners' activities in a frame of development of the Regional Center on treatment, care and support to PLWH in Central Asia was held on February 25, in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The experts from Republican AIDS Centers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, representatives of therapeutic establishments providing treatment services to HIV diseases, as well as medical institutions responsible for training the HIV specialists, representatives of AIDS-service NGOs providing prevention-related services to HIV-positive

people and their family member were actively involved into this round table meeting discussion. Besides, representatives of UNAIDS, CDC/CAR, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, AFEW, AIHA and others were also invited.

The round table participants discussed further actions on institutionalization of Central Asian educational and informational center on PLWH treatment, care and support established in the Republic of Uzbekistan under assistance of Healthcare Ministries of four states and CAAP in 2008.

The round table participants discussed outcomes of training needs assessment on treatment and care for PLWH, and partnership possibilities within development and support of that Center during 2009. As a result, the key collaboration directions of all interested parties in frame of support to the Center were identified.

Sub-component 1.2. Surveillance and Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Electronic surveillance software

The letters of inquiries on registration forms, order of patient referral to HIV blood testing and diagnosis were prepared to be addressed to the Heads of Republican AIDS Centers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Probation of a computer-based ES software is continuing on local level in pilot cities of Karaganda and Temirtau (RK): input of data received from laboratory, epidemiological and clinic departments.

The National Project Coordinator in Kazakhstan developed thesis on SS and ES which are going to be presented on international conference in Cape Town, SAR, in July 2009.

Sentinel surveillance

The SS and ES Coordinator prepared and submitted a request to RPMU for funding a seminar on input of SS data into the EPI-INFO software which is to take place on March 16 – 19, 2009 in Bishkek/

Contracts with 10 pilot Oblast AIDS Centers on payment for work conducted in terms of SS are prepared and agreed (except RK) as well as contracts with Republican AIDS Centers on hiring specialists for implementation of SS and ES activities.

Sentinel surveillance amongst IDU, SW, pregnant women and STD diseases is going on in three sites of Republic of Tajikistan (Kulyab, Khorog, and Vakhdat).

SS of pregnant women and STD diseases started in Khorog in 20 January, 2009 and it is under finalization now. The missing materials were delivered to Khorog Oblast AIDS Center in February 12 (gloves, disinfectants, sterile tampons, waste utilization containers, tables). Now, the SS amongst IDU and SW is started in Khorog. The SS plan for 2009 is developed jointly with Republican AIDS Center.

A training seminar on SS was held in Tashkent on February 10-13. The seminar theme was «Final training on working off the outcomes of implementing the principles of quality ensuring and quality control into laboratory diagnostics of HIV infection». As a result, representatives of four pilot sites (Khorezm, Bukhara, Syrdarya and Fergana oblasts), heads of all laboratories and laboratory doctors of AIDS Centers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (23 people in total).

The seminar was based on agenda prepared and agreed with Central Asia AIDS Control Project and CDC/CAR. The agenda was changed according to feedbacks and recommendations given by the seminar participants.

The purpose of that seminar was to improve quality of the laboratory researches on HIV diagnostics. A set of handouts was developed especially for the training participants. Based on the trainees needs, the training was conducted in two languages: Russian and Uzbek.

In frame of Sentinel Surveillance course, proper documents for hiring the field workers involved into SS were collected in four pilot sites of Uzbekistan (Bukhara, Khorezm, Syrdariya, Fergana).

Strengthening M&E system

- Promoting a regional information database (CARISA)

Seminars on introduction and work with informational management system (MIS) and regional information HIV/AIDS database (CARISA) took place in Tashkent on February 26-27. The Project Regional M&E specialist and IT specialist were assigned to conduct these seminars.

4 people were trained to work with MIS: national coordinator and two M&E specialists from CAAP national office, one M&E specialist from GFATM. The Project IT specialist introduced he technical capacities of IDEA system to the seminar participants.

Seven people were trained during the training on Regional information HIV/AIDS database (CARISA): three physicians-epidemiologists of the Republican AIDS Center, the GFATM M&E specialists; two specialists from PARK, and the CAAP training program specialist.

- Strengthening the country's M&E capacity

Meeting of the M&E technical working group was initiated and held in the Republic of Tajikistan with involvement of interested state institutions and international organizations (WHO, CARHAP, Soros Foundation, CAPACITY Project, UNODC, etc.). Plan for 2009 and progress report for 2008 of the M&E technical working group were discussed.

M&E specialist of the Project National Office who is responsible for implementation of Regional information HIV/AIDS database (CARISA) met with the CARHAP consultant to discuss organization and conduct a meeting of National M&E Coordination Committee's technical group, interconnection between CARISA and existing monitoring and evaluation systems.

Sub-component 1.3. Human Resources Development

Regional Training Centers (RTC)

The Specialist on Public healthcare had developed terms of reference to hire two employees for Regional training centers on harm reduction in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The terms of reference to conduct an assessment of training needs in harm reduction is developed. Also, preparatory works to hold a national training for NGOs on work with labor migrants are done. The training is planned to be held in Astana on March 2-6, 2009.

Promoting the communication strategy

Communications and strategy coordinator fulfilled the following work during the reporting period:

- The RPMU monthly report for January is prepared.
- Information about the Interim Working Group Meeting of EurAsEC member-countries on development of Regional HIV counteraction strategy in Central Asia is properly prepared

and disseminated. Draft of the Regional strategy was placed on the CAAP web-site in Russian and English languages.

- Information about Regional round table meeting on coordination of national and international partners' activities in frame of development of the Regional Center on treatment, care and support to PLWH in Central Asia in Almaty, Kazakhstan, was placed on the Project web-site and disseminated through electronic mailing list among the CA Mass-Media and Project partners.
- Terms of reference for selecting a proper organization to conduct a survey on impact of HIV-infection on economies of Central Asian states is under development.
- Work on informational content of the web-site is in progress (lists of Regional technical working groups' members, concepts of Regional training centers' development, quarterly reports prepared by grant recipients of the RAF large sub-projects, information about prolongation of TUMAR project, progress reports of program and financial monitoring of the RAF sub-projects in Kyrgyz Republic were put on the web-site).

COMPONENT 2. CENTRAL ASIA AIDS FUND

1. *Grant-related activities*

In accordance with the World Bank recommendations, the working plan for 2009-2010 was developed; it reflects a nature, directions and mechanisms of implementing and using the funds within Component 2 of Project – Regional AIDS Fund. Mainly, with transition to results-based funding it was planned to hold a number of activities, including services cost assessment provided to the mostly vulnerable groups of population. Taking into account the narrowing of activities, the RAF will fund only those organizations which have a capacity and experience in harm reduction programs implementation. Therefore, the Project has developed a terms of reference to hire a consulting agency for verification of sub-recipients' program outcomes within 4th Grant Round.

In addition, ToRs were developed and selection of international consultant on revision of the Regional AIDS Fund Guideline was conducted.

Implementation of small (national) sub-projects in the Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan has started up in February. All organizations received the first tranche in amount of 20% from the total grant amount.

Field monitoring and evaluation visits made to the grant recipients of 2nd and 3rd GR in Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan during the reporting period. Also, the same visits planned to make in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (March-April 2009).

The large sub-projects from the following applicants are adjusted to the World Bank requirements: Republican AIDS Center of Uzbekistan, International Organization on Migration (IOM) and United Nations Organization on Drug Control (UNODC).

Implementation of RAF small grants

Funding of small grants within the 3rd GR RAF started in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic in February.

The Project national office in Republic of Kazakhstan prepared a letter of authorization for NGO «Sau Urpak» on utilization of the budget savings made within the small grant project to hold a meeting of volunteers.

Additional framework agreements were concluded with grant recipients (6 organizations) to extend duration of the sub-project implementation. Reasons: untimely disbursement of project payments by UNDP (namely, closure of disbursements from November 20, 2008 till January 30 2009)

National plans of monitoring trips on interim and final evaluation of small grants within 2nd and 3rd GR RAF for 2009-10 are developed.

Table of the funds disbursement as of the 01.02.2009 for the 2nd grant round is prepared.

The Project national specialists in Tajikistan tracked the reporting documentation of the 2nd round grant recipients who are finalizing implementation of their projects.

The framework agreements and all necessary appendixes were signed up by winners of the 3rd grant round, National Project coordinators and Vice deputy of UNDP Resident representative in Tajikistan.

Plan of 2nd and 3rd GR sub-project monitoring trips for 2009-2010 was prepared and submitted to RPMU.

According to recommendations and feedbacks given by the World Bank, indicators and basic data on eight SPP of 3rd GR are revised and sent to RPMU. Proper changes made into the monitoring table of SPP of 3rd GR.

Monitoring trips to the 2nd GR grant recipients, implementing projects in Tashkent, were continued in February in Republic of Uzbekistan.

In January, the Cabinet of Ministers of Republic of Uzbekistan approved 14 sub-projects out of 39 sub-projects approved previously by the Country Steering Committee in frame of the RAF 3rd grant round.

NGO «Ishonch va Khayot» successfully finished implementation of the project «Providing non-medical care and support to HIV-positive children and their family members». Purpose of this grant was to improve quality of lifestyles of HIV-positive children through providing non-medical care and support, and increasing their access to ARV therapy. 150 children were covered by the project in total.

Working meetings, business trips

The RAF Coordinator participated in the following meetings and workshops:

February 23, Regional meeting of TUMAR Project (PSI) on scaling up coverage of mostly vulnerable groups in seven model sites of four Central Asian countries, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

February 25, Round table meeting on development of regional training centers on treatment, care and support, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

February 4, working meeting the Component 1 Coordinator and Public healthcare Specialist with UNICEF Regional Adviser on HIV/AIDS, Ms. Yadranka Mimisa regarding organization of a round table meeting on promotion of the Regional treatment and care training center for PLWH.

February 6, the Project Coordinator of SS and ES participated in the Round table meeting on development of the country proposal to GFATM within its 9th round, initiated by Open Society of «Soros-Kyrgyzstan» Foundation jointly with Secretariat of RSC KR;

20.02.09, Regional specialist on M&E had a meeting with UNAIDS M&E specialist in Central Asia, Mr. Ilnitskiy A. B. Theme: discussion of priority issues of upcoming meetings of Regional working groups on M&E.

February 26, National Project Coordinator in Kazakhstan participated in the workshop on development of association of PLWH in CA (Almaty).

The CAAP National Coordinator in Tajikistan, Mr. Latipov A. had several meetings:

- with Mr. Farid Karakhanov, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Tajikistan . Agenda: discussion of issues of administrative-financial interaction between these two organizations,

including principles of the Project funds deficit on account of UNDP country office starting from December 2008 till midst of February 2009; providing access of the Project admin-financial assistant to the ATLAS system;

- with ex-Secretary of the National Steering Committee on prevention and counteraction to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, Mr. Gaibov A. G. Agenda: discussion of further status of specialists attached to the NSC Secretariat.

- with Public healthcare specialist of the WB country office, Mr. Kolchin V. Agenda: outcomes of the 3rd GR RAF, including two SPP who are refused by the WB to be funded.

- with Vice Minister of healthcare of RT, Mr. Mirzoev A.S. Agenda: necessity to conduct interim evaluation of National HIV/AIDS program and results of the 3rd GR RAF.

Legal, Financial and Technical Issues of RPMU

In February, the RPMU staff members in close coordination with National Coordinators had been working on development of the working plan for quarters II-IV of 2009 and for the first part of 2010.

Financial issues

According to the World Bank instructions, the RPMU revised its operational budget in order to avoid overshoot of the budgetary limit, i.e. 15% from the total Project budget

Financial reporting. Application for replenishment was sent to the World Bank because of the expenses produced in Quarter IV, 2008. As a result, the funds requested were received onto the Special account. The 2008 budget revision issue was discussed during the World Bank mission. The budget is due to be agreed after its final revision, connected to the Project restructuring. Terms of reference for audit of big grants was sent to the World Bank for further approval. Once the approval is received, selection of proper auditing agency will be made.

Operational Guidelines. According to the World Bank recommendations, the Operational Guidelines had been revised. Some corrections made in part of audit. These issues are under approval. Besides, the operational guidelines are submitted to EurAsEC for study and possible adjustment.

See www.caap.info