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SUCCESS STORY

Regional and Local Authorities in Tajikistan Support TB Patients in their Communities

USAID TB Control Program Engages Regional and Local Authorities in Tajikistan to Provide Assistance to TB Patients



Rano Rakhimzoda – Farkhor Region Khukumat Chair spearheads social and financial assistance for the region's TB patients.



Mirzohon Gulmamadzoda – Chief of Temurmalik Region underscores his region's commitment in partnership with jamoats and business owners to provide social and financial support to TB/MDR TB patients.

"The health of our nation is the wealth of our people. Today, it is the number one priority."

Rano Rakhimzoda

Photos: USAID TB Control Program

Across Tajikistan's Rasht Valley, and in the Dangara, Temurmalik, Baldzhuvan and Farkhor districts, a new, patient-centered approach (PCA) to outpatient tuberculosis (TB) and multidrug resistant (MDR) TB was initiated in 2013 by USAID programs. An approach to care that reflects individual patient needs and values, PCA is critical to effective TB control; however, implementing it in practice can be challenging. Therefore, the engagement of regional and local authorities (khukumats and jamoats) in providing social and financial support to TB patients is vital to the program's success.

In 2015, based on the proven success of this initiative, USAID TB Control Program scaled up these activities to extend beyond the existing nine districts by including 18 new program areas in Sogd Oblast where in response to regional-level directives, local committees have implemented detailed action plans for exempting needy TB and MDR-TB patients from property taxes and monthly electricity, water, and garbage disposal costs for the duration of the TB treatment. By engaging regional and local authorities under USAID TB Control Program, a robust platform of collaboration between khukumats and jamoats as well as TB centers and primary care providers has been established for improved TB detection, diagnostics, and treatment compliance. This platform has also led to the establishment of a TB management database of patient services and supporting documentation.

Since 2015, in the USAID TB Control Program areas 181 TB/MDR-TB patients have benefited from monthly cash and in-kind assistance and exemptions from utility payments provided as a result of significant increases in TB prevention and social assistance funding. For example, the Temurmalik District budget saw more than a four-fold increase in TB prevention and assistance funding from 40,000 somoni in 2012 to 175,000 somoni in 2015.

Mirzohon Gulmamadzoda, the head of the Temurmalik Region, acknowledged that such an impressive result would not have been possible without commitment of the region's leadership and full scale engagement of local jamoats and business owners in providing social assistance to TB/MDR-TB patients. "We fully recognize how critically important is TB detection and treatment and commit ourselves fully to carry out TB control in our region."

These sentiments have been echoed by Rano Rakhimzoda, chair of the Farkhor Region Khukumat: "The health of our nation is the wealth of our people. Today, it is the number one priority." She stressed the importance of changing the regional leadership's approach to TB management and recognizing the need for providing psychosocial assistance to MDR-TB patients.

Continued implementation of these patient-centered initiatives under the five-year USAID TB Control Program in Tajikistan will establish a robust system of social and financial support of TB/MDR-TB patients that strengthens treatment adherence while reducing patient treatment drop-out, as well as infection rates among family members and the community overall.